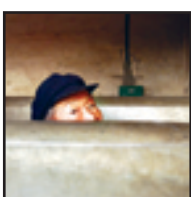


"We could easily spot traitors who served the Japanese because their hands were not harsh from labor work." **Page 9**



Your wallet will hardly feel a thing when you pay for the street-style delicacies in Vietnam. **Page 14**



The sexual innuendo common in jokes in *er ren zhuan* have put the folk performance off stage. **Page 11**



BEIJING TODAY

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 6 2004

NO. 140

CN11-0120

HTTP://BJTODAY.YNET.COM

China Confirms Further Bird Flu Outbreaks

China's Ministry of Agriculture Thursday confirmed previously suspected outbreaks of the H5N1 strain of avian flu in east China's Anhui Province and Jiangxi Province.

This followed the conformation Wednesday of a previously suspected outbreak in Chenggong County, Yunnan Province.

The confirmation was based on reports from the National Bird Flu Reference Laboratory. No humans have been reported to have contracted the disease so far.

Local governments in the affected areas have been taking measures including the slaughter of fowls and compulsory vaccination to prevent the spread of the outbreak.

Also reported were new suspected bird flu cases - in Dongxiang County in Jiangxi Province, Shilin County in Yunnan Province, and Luoding and Haifeng in Guangdong Province.

As soon as the suspected cases were spotted, local governments began slaughtering chickens and implementing compulsory vaccination. Samples have been sent to the National Bird Flu Reference Laboratory.

Before the latest outbreak, bird flu had been confirmed in Long'an County in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, the city of Wugang in Hunan Province, Wuxue in Hubei Province and Chao'an County, Guangdong Province. (Xinhua)

(See reports on page 2, page 4 and page 5.)

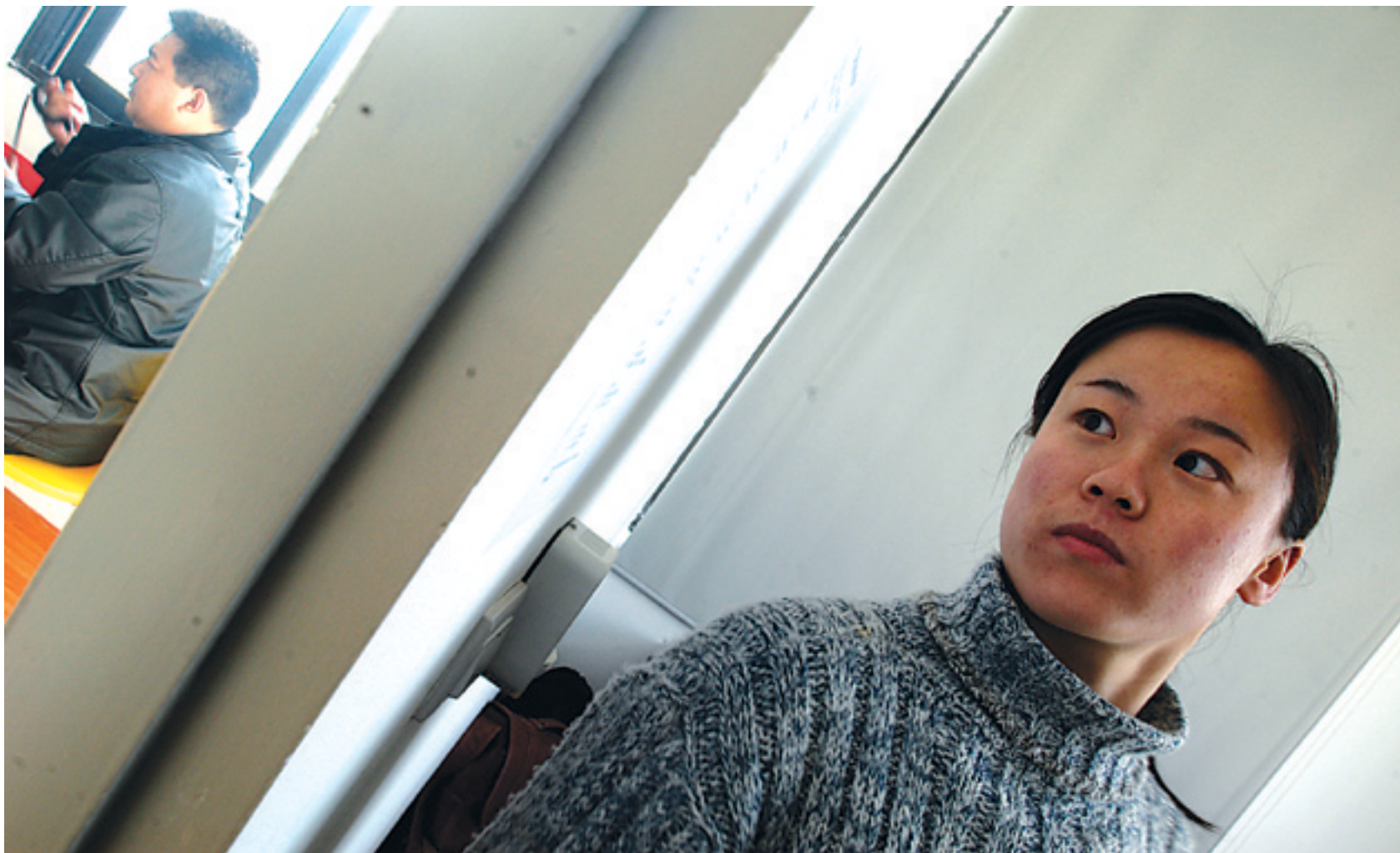


Poultry keepers in Lhasa vaccinate local chickens on February 4.



Local officials in Jinan, Shandong Province have intensified poultry market surveillance.

Xinhua Photos



Guo Liying, one of the six graduates, waits for the outcome of her interview with a potential employer.

Photo provided by Shanghai Morning Post

Make Way for Super Nanny

By Xiao Rong

The arrival of six diploma-qualified housekeepers in Shanghai last Sunday has sparked something of a media frenzy, with all of them quickly securing well-paid jobs in the metropolis.

The six are the second batch of graduates from Hebei Industrial Vocational School's household management major, and have been snapped up by local professionals impressed by their education background.

Guo Sujie, one of the six graduates told *Beijing Today* in a telephone interview Tuesday, "I am expecting to find the right position for my future career in Shanghai."

He and his five other classmates are now taking a one week training course covering childcare and cooking to be better qualified as housekeepers.

Hot demand

Shanghai Laibang Household Management, the company that brought the six graduates to Shanghai, has received numerous calls and on-line enquiries from Shanghai residents interested in employing this new kind of "super nanny."

With the exception of Guo Sujie, who has been employed by Shanghai Laibang as a management staff, the graduates have all signed contracts to work in Shanghai as nannies or housekeepers. Compared with the 500 to 600 yuan housekeepers with no formal qualifications generally earn, they will receive an average monthly salary of 1,800 yuan.

This initial success has encouraged the company to introduce more such graduates into the local household management industry.

But not everyone is convinced that such qualifications are necessarily a good thing. An unnamed manager from Shanghai Jialilai Household Management was quoted in Shanghai's *Evening News* as saying, "It's true that these students have received systematic education in the field of household management, but when it comes to practical housekeeping skills, it's quite another thing!"

He also expressed concern that such graduates might have higher career expectations than nannies or housekeepers with no qualifications and less bargaining power, and might be tempted by the offer of higher pay to change jobs.

The current training course the five housekeepers-to-be are undertaking has highlighted the fact that theory is not enough, more practical

skills are required, Guo Sujie told *Beijing Today*.

"The media has been paying us too much attention, which has affected our work," he said. "We just want to focus on our jobs with a low-key attitude."

Guo did not respond when asked whether he and his classmates were resolved to continue in this type of work in the long term. Most of the first group of graduates from his major, who were sent to Beijing last year, have given up working as housekeepers, for various reasons.

A humble career?

While the benefits of the introduction of qualified housekeepers in Shanghai remain to be proven, steps are also being taken in Beijing to develop the market for qualified household management staff.

A group of 39 students last December became the first in China to receive the certificate of senior household management authorized by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security.

During the three-month training course, trainees are required to complete 17 subjects covering Chinese and western cuisine skills, household sanitation, nursing for the elderly and infants, as well as English, computer skills, legal studies and ethics.

The training course was co-sponsored by the ministry and Beijing City University, which has established a Household Management Experimental Center to carry out research in this area.

Su Ying, head of the experimental center office, told *Beijing Today*, "Feedback from clients has shown that, of the 39 graduates, those from outside Beijing are better received than local trainees because they tend to have a more humble attitude in regard to their positions."

It usually takes some time for graduates to become accustomed to working as nannies or housekeepers, despite their qualifications, according to Su. She attributed this fact to traditional social values that discriminate against those who work in the service industry, especially housekeepers.

Jia Li, one of the 39 graduates of the course, echoes Su's view, describing her experience working as a housemaid as "purgatory."

Jia said she was not good at housework before and seldom did housework at home. "My confidence was greatly boosted after I finished the

'At first I just couldn't tolerate the idea that I was working as a servant.'

— Jia Li

training course, but I never imagined that I could be so miserable in the process of getting used to the role of a housemaid."

Jia has had two housekeeping jobs since her graduation, one working for a company manager, the other for a magazine. Her employers expressed satisfaction with her service, though later she was chosen by the training center to undertake management work.

"At first I just couldn't tolerate the idea that I was working as a servant," said Jia, "In the past, I was looked after by my family, but now, I need to take care of others."

But Jia says she has gradually come to accept her role, "My idea is that having taken on this job, I should try to do it as best as I can."

More qualified staff needed

Most of Jia Li's fellow graduates of the training course, however, are no longer working as housekeepers. "Once they have succeeded in treating their career equally, they will get more development chances," said Su Ying.

Referring to recent news stories about the employment in China of housekeepers from the Philippines, Su Ying expressed confidence that most employers would prefer to hire locals. "Besides, we are more familiar with the requirements of our local clients here. For example, most clients in Beijing, be they foreign entrepreneurs or Chinese, would like to employ housekeepers that can cook traditional Chinese cuisine and can teach their children about Chinese culture."

There is great potential for China's household management market, Su stressed, but the key issue lies in the lack of qualified locals.

Li Fuzhi, director of the Household Management Research Institute of the Beijing City University, maintains that long-term education rather than short-term training should be an efficient way of solving the problem.

"The healthy development of China's housekeeping industry should not solely depend on short-term practical training courses organized by various household management companies," Li said. "Only when sound higher education and vocational education systems have been established, can the abundant local labor force be turned into labor resources."

Based on the successes and failures of the first senior household management qualification training course, the experimental center is considering focusing on more specialized training courses such as family nutrition and nursing.

"It's just a trial for our center to hold the training course for the senior household management qualification and it's far from perfect," concludes Su. "Still, I'm optimistic about the growth of China's senior household management market, which I believe will be a future trend of the housekeeping industry."



A worker disposes of slaughtered ducks at Shima, Anhui Province last Saturday. Photo by Chen Tuodi

China Moves to Counterattack Bird Flu

By Yu Shanshan

As previously suspected bird flu cases in three provinces were confirmed and new suspected cases reported in seven different regions, an increasing number of Chinese localities are taking measures to handle the deadly disease as well as to ensure a safe and sufficient supply of poultry on the market.

Source cleansed

The government has ordered the slaughter of all poultry within a three-kilometer radius of affected areas immediately after the outbreak of the epidemic, and all poultry within a further two-kilometer radius must be vaccinated.

Local governments have started distributing compensation to farmers whose poultry have been slaughtered. The government will also cover the cost of vacci-

nation of poultry in the affected areas.

According to the animal epidemic control headquarters of Zhanglingshang, in central Hubei Province, there are 3,600 farmers in three towns eligible for compensation. Municipal authorities have to date raised over one million yuan to fund the compensation payouts.

Markets closed

The Ministry of Commerce, the State Administration for Industry and Commerce and the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine have intensified poultry market surveillance while at the same time endeavoring to ensure a continued supply of safe meat.

In addition to a daily report on market demand of daily necessities in the country's 36 major cities, the com-

mercial departments of those provinces and regions where bird flu cases have been reported have intensified surveillance of local supermarkets and community markets.

Market patrols have been stepped up in the zones between bird flu-affected and non-affected areas. Exports of avian products from Guangxi, Hunan and Hubei, where bird flu cases have been found, have been suspended and all poultry processing factories within the avian flu affected-regions have been closed down.

Beijing reaction

In Beijing, strict measures have been taken to tighten the control and inspection of poultry raising, slaughter, processing, transport and trade, and to prevent the introduction of the highly infectious bird flu from abroad or from disease-hit areas within China.

Meanwhile the municipal government issued a notice on January 29 banning the trade and slaughter of poultry at wholesale farm produce markets.

The capital has also intensified inspection of cargo and transport vehicles from bird flu-stricken countries and regions. A 24-hour food quarantine has been introduced at 26 entrances to Beijing and 27 quarantine stations along the highways.

The Beijing Zoo and other wildlife parks have halted all inward and outward transfer of animals, and have employed strong lights to drive away crows and other wild birds, so as to prevent the flu transmission between birds.

The Beijing Center for Disease Control has strengthened the inspection of human influenza, with monitoring stations established in 200 hospitals to examine samples from influenza-affected patients.

Before February 15, avian flu control medical workers will have finished their training course and already, 200 inspection sites for human-to-human transmission of avian flu have been opened.

After confirming that there are no human cases of bird flu in China, WHO official Michael Ryan said Tuesday that he was pleased with the effective measures the Chinese government has taken.

According to WHO China office spokesman Roy Wadia, two experts from the Netherlands have arrived in Beijing to assist China's campaign against the deadly avian flu.

He said the experts, who had recently assisted authorities in Vietnam, would offer advice on safety issues regarding culling and other issues, including assessment of the monitoring system and animal vaccination.

Astronaut Training Starts for Shenzhou VI

By Yu Shanshan

China's astronaut team is to start training in March for the nation's second manned space flight on Shenzhou VI, *Beijing Youth Daily* reported on Monday.

The 14 astronauts have been resting since Yang Liwei, a member of the team, completed China's first manned space flight in October last year. During that period, they have done only light physical training, reviewed flight operations and summed up the experience from Shenzhou V flight.

The training for Shenzhou VI would be

mainly based on the training courses for Shenzhou V, said Huang Weifen, director of astronaut selection and training section. However, some changes would be made as two astronauts were expected to fly in Shenzhou VI, said Huang.

The 14 astronauts, including Yang Liwei, will be divided into seven pairs according to their characteristics and level of cooperation.

Three pairs will form a new team for China's second manned space flight and, finally one pair will fly in Shenzhou VI.

China has made plans to select and train new astronauts as the 14 astronauts are all over 30. The selection will be conducted in the coming two or three years.

According to Wang Liheng, director of the Science and Technology Commission under the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation, Shenzhou VI is expected to be launched in 2005.

Provisional Measures Set on Transfer of State-owned Assets Rights

By Wang Xiaoxiao

The provisional measures on the administration of transfer of state-owned assets rights came into force on Sunday. The measures are promulgated jointly by the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission and the Ministry of Finance.

The previous requirement that non-listed enterprises can deal with their transfer of state-owned assets right in the market, without any restriction of

area or industry, apply under the new provisional measures.

Allowable methods of transfer of state-owned assets rights are by auction, invitation of public bidding and other legally stipulated means. Transfer of rights to domestic and foreign artificial persons, natural persons or other organizations should also follow the new provisional measures.

The provisional measures include specific criteria on the entire process of transfer, including procedures and transfer value. According to provisional measures, the value of the assets rights should be officially estimated and set as a reference value. When the value during the dealing is lower than 90 percent of the evaluated price, the dealing should be suspended until it gains approval by related organs.

Chinese Scientists Decode Evolution of SARS virus

By Huo Xia

Chinese scientists last Friday announced a breakthrough in decoding the evolutionary pattern of the coronavirus, which caused the worldwide outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) last year.

The January 29 issue of *Science* in the US published the latest findings under the title *The Evolution of SARS*.

Zhao Guoping, a noted researcher from the China National Human Genome Research Institute, said Friday that an eight-month extensive study of the SARS coronavirus in southern China revealed patterns in various phases of the virus evolution.

Molecular analysis of virus isolated from SARS patients in Guangdong and Hong Kong demonstrated that the outbreak of SARS in 2002-2003 can be divided into three phases.

The initial phase of the epidemic was characterized by quick amino acid changes in the virus and relatively low infectivity.

The middle phase of virus evolution was marked by the "super-spreader cases" and a slower amino

acid substitution rate and high infectivity.

The last phase of the epidemic saw a relatively stable virus genome structure.

The study shows that the virus spread from animals to people. With the mutation in people, SARS become infective from people to people.

The study also indicated that the mutation rate of the coronavirus is a third of that of the AIDS virus. The characteristic of relatively low mutation rate and mutational speed is good for the study of vaccine.

Scientists analyzed the genetic coding of 18 virus samples isolated from 24 SARS patients in Guangdong and Hong Kong and 11 coronavirus-infected biological samples.

After comparing the genetic coding with those of the existing 32 human SARS coronavirus and two coronavirus of civet cats, scientists had a clearer understanding of the molecular mutational patterns of SARS, shedding light on pre-emptive control strategies and the development of therapies and vaccines for the virus, according to the report.

More than 60 scientists from Beijing, Shanghai, Wuhan, Hubei Province, Guangdong Province, Hong Kong and the US, assembled by the Chinese SARS Molecular Epidemiology Consortium, agreed that effective monitoring and control of the newly emerged animal SARS corona virus would contain the reappearance of last year's SARS outbreak.

The study is widely expected to provide valuable reference for studies of other animal-sourced infectious diseases such as the bird flu.

China Seeks to Boost Capital Market

A newly issued policy paper on the development of China's capital market has provided opportunities for further boosting the country's financial sectors, analysts said Tuesday.

China's State Council released the paper Sunday. The paper outlines the guiding principles and tasks for promoting the capital market and plans to improve related policies.

Li Qingyuan, an official with the China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC), said there was an urgent need to focus on the development of the capital market as a means of propping up China's economic growth.

Finance is the key of modern economy and the capital market plays a vital role in various financial sectors, Li stressed.

The nine-point strategy plan calls on regional governments to make coordinated efforts to minimize market risks when formulating policies involving the capital market, so as to create a sound environment and conditions for the stable development of the market.

Li said that financial resources would be better utilized in a country with a fully-fledged capital market, which would also serve to enhance the country's economic competitiveness.

Despite more than 20 years' effort to restructure the national economy, China's capital market size was only 4.2 trillion yuan (US \$513 billion) by the end of 2003.

The liquidity of the market is low, and about two-thirds of the shares of listed companies are government-owned and non-tradable on the stock exchange.

Wu Xiaohu, a financial research fellow at Renmin University, predicted that the construction of China's capital market would be a key project during the future reform of the country's financial system.

The policy paper has further addressed the fundamental function of the capital market in future distribution of national resources, Wu added, forecasting that the measures designed to prevent and control market risks and protect investor's interests in the paper would facilitate the maintenance of market stability and development and further boost investor confidence.

China's two stock markets – in Shanghai and Shenzhen – surged Monday on the State Council's call for further development of the capital market. (Xinhua News)

Online Inspection for Foreign Capital Enterprises

By Wang Xiaoxiao

The State Administration of Industry and Commerce has launched a new online annual inspection system for foreign-capital funded enterprises, making the procedure much more simple and convenient.

Those enterprises can now log on to wzj.saic.gov.cn, fill out the application form and submit it directly to the foreign capital bureau of the state administration.

After the primary examination, the enterprise should send any related documents to the bureau for further checking and go through the procedure of the annual inspection. Meanwhile, the usual form of annual inspection is still available.

China Levies Anti-dumping Tax on Imported Phenol

China on Sunday began levying an anti-dumping tax on imports of phenol, a widely used chemical component produced in Japan, the South Korea, the United States and Taiwan.

The Ministry of Commerce said in its final verdict issued Sunday that their investigation found that dumping had occurred and had caused substantial damage to the mainland's industry.

The ministry's verdict required importers of such products to pay a tax ranging from 3 to 144 percent, depending on the degree of dumping by specific manufacturers, for a period of five years.

China took temporary anti-dumping measures on the chemical beginning from June 9, 2003, requiring importers to pay cash deposits to Chinese customs ranging from 7 to 144 percent. (Xinhua)

Microsoft China President Heads for Shanda

By Shan Jinliang

Celebrated Chinese business leader Tang Jun left his position as Microsoft China president on Tuesday despite a personal request to stay from Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer.

Tang has already accepted a new job as president of Shanghai-based online gaming operator Shanda Networking Corp., and will start at that post next Monday.

Announcement of the news confirmed rumors circulating since October last year that Tang wanted out of the Microsoft China presidency following the restructuring of the company. In those reforms, Chen Yongzheng was appointed Greater China Region CEO, a position effectively superior to Tang's.

Waning power

In an interview with *Beijing Star Daily* on Tuesday, Tang said, "The (president) post has no real weight anymore."

Tang joined Microsoft China in 1994 and was appointed president in March 2003. Following the company's restructuring,

however, the scope of his authority shrunk from core areas of business such as marketing, sales, finance and human resources to mainly technical affairs.

"My departure could help solve structural problems within Microsoft Greater China Region," he stated, noting that he could have stayed as president for another five years.

Over the two years in which Tang was president, Microsoft China recorded its best-ever performance. It posted the highest sales of any of Microsoft's global subsidiaries for six straight months from July 2002 and January 2003 and the fastest growth among all 82 of the software giant's branch companies.

On Tuesday, following his departure, Microsoft China granted Tang an honorary presidential title, a first for the company, in respect of his many contributions. Unlike preceding presidents Wu Shihong and Gao Qun Yao, who left Microsoft under duress, Tang described his departure as pleasant and said he is looking forward to making a new beginning.

He told *Beijing Star Daily* that despite his success over the past few years, Microsoft's achievements under his reign still fell short of his expectations, particularly in terms of "Microsoft's public image and its leadership in China's software industry."

A good match

Chinese media widely reported that Tang and Shanda Chairman Chen Tianqiao met before Spring Festival. On Tuesday, Tang told Netease that he selected Shanda, China's top online game operator with 150 million registered users, from seven companies that had offered him leadership jobs.

He explained that he made that choice because Shanda was a private firm in a field closely connected to his area of expertise, the software industry. "Now I have a better opportunity and room to develop," he said, noting that his remuneration at Shanda would not be less than that he received at Microsoft.

In fact, with the company's imminent IPO on the US's China stock-hungry Nasdaq market,

Tang could make huge money through the move.

Shanda's explosive success in China has already pushed chairman Chen's personal assets to around 4 billion yuan. Moreover, the company is strengthening its international position and has acquired shares in more than 10 companies in this country, North America and Japan.

On Tuesday, Chen renounced his title as Shanda president to make way for Tang, whom he called an international-level manager "able to meet the needs of Shanda for our IPO and international growth." *Shanghai Youth Daily* commented that day that Tang could improve financial transparency at Shanda, a key step in its successful listing.

The same day, other domestic media quoted an unnamed senior Shanda executive as saying that Tang's experience at Microsoft would be key to his success in the post, especially in developing the company's existing partnership with Microsoft in China's electronic entertainment industry.



New Shanda President Tang Jun

Photos by Photocom

Volkswagen Denies China Investment Cut

By Shan Jinliang

Volkswagen China released an official statement on Tuesday refuting rumors that the company plans to cut its investment in China in the period of 2004 to 2008 from 6 billion euros to 5 billion euros.

In Tuesday's statement, Volkswagen China acknowledged that company chairman Bernd Pieschetsrieder had talked to foreign reporters about changes in the exchange rate of the euro to the US dollar, but denied any intention to adjust investment. The statement explained that the 25 percent rise in the value of the euro to the dollar has effectively devalued last year's announced plan to invest 6 billion euros to an adjusted figure of 5 billion euros today.

Volkswagen further explained to the press that the 6 billion euro investment in China set by the company's supervisory board was not a fixed figure but a number intended to float along with market changes. However, a Xinhua News Agency report on Monday speculated that that automaker was cutting the size of its investment not only because of the robust euro, but also because the company's performance was not strong in 2003 and its profit margin shrank.

Volkswagen announced plans to invest 6 billion euros in China over the next five years last July with the intention of pushing annual production in this country to 1.6 million vehicles. Much of that investment has been earmarked for the construction of two new plants needed to realize the ambitious growth plan.

Baogang Seals Deal for First Overseas Plant

By Tony Shan

Shanghai-based Baogang Group announced to the press on Tuesday that it had launched a joint venture project with Brazil's Companhia Vale do Rio Doce (CVRD). The new venture is the first overseas plant for China's top steel manufacturer.

With this project, Baogang has expanded its overseas business scope from steel trading and iron ore mining to steel production. Baogang announced the venture would represent the largest overseas direct investment project yet for a Chinese company.

China National Radio reported on Wednesday that the new joint venture would manufacture 3.7 million tons of steel every year and Arcelor, the world's largest steel company, planned to take part in the project.

This is the second project between Baogang and CVRD. In 2002, they jointly invested to establish an iron ore production company capable of producing eight million tons of ore annually, an important source of raw materials for Baogang.

The overseas projects are key to Baogang's plan to become an internationalized company before 2010. Last July, the company started that push by launching a 6.5-billion-yuan cooperation project with Nippon Steel and Arcelor for auto plate production.

In the past year, China has surpassed the US to become the world's No. 1 steel importer. An estimated 30 million tons of steel were imported last year, mostly in the form of high-end products for use in auto, home appliance, electronic product and ship manufacturing. The *Beijing Times* reported on Wednesday that Baogang was targeting the high-end market with its new products in order to capitalize on rising domestic demand for good steel.



Goodbaby ran a children's fashion show featuring Mickey, Minnie and other popular characters concurrent to Sunday's 2004 China Retail Summit in Hangzhou.

Goodbaby Network Covers Top Global Kids Brands

By Shan Jinliang

The world's top ten producers of goods for children have agreed to use the sales network of Goodbaby to enter the Chinese market, said Song Zhenghuan, president of Goodbabay Group at the 2004 China Retail Summit in Hangzhou on Sunday.

Song said Nike Kids and Tommee Tippee have already sold their products in the domestic market through Goodbaby's network. The Kunshan, Zhejiang Province-based company is the top domestic brand of kids products. The eight other foreign users of the network are European companies Cakewalk, Parrot, Minman, Quinny and Maxi-Cosi, as well as North American brands Safety 1st, Cosco and Huffy.

According to Song, these eight brands decided to cooperate with Goodbaby af-

ter witnessing Nike's success in China through working with the company. The Nike Kids label did not perform well in its first two years on the market, 2001 and 2002, but last year, after Nike Kids outlets were opened beside Goodbaby counterparts in shopping centers around the country, total sales shot to over 20 million yuan, 5.5 million yuan of which came from Beijing.

Song told *Beijing Business Today* on Monday that Goodbaby would become the sole domestic agent for all the brands, and with the exception of Nike Kids, provide them with designs, information on domestic styles and training and act as an original equipment manufacturer (OEM) for these brands. He added that through localization, these brands' products should be priced at about half the cost of imported products.

Dongfeng, Renault in Truck Pact

Renault Trucks, part of the giant Volvo AB group, has reached an acquisition agreement with Dongfeng Motor Corp. for the manufacture of 7,000 heavy trucks annually in China over the next five years.

Sweden-based Volvo revealed the agreement on its website. According to that announcement, the deal enables Renault Trucks to acquire a share of the capital in Dongfeng Liuzhou Motors, a heavy truck subsidiary of major domestic automaker Dongfeng.

Zhu Jiefei, a spokesman for Dongfeng, confirmed the agreement, which was signed in Paris last Thursday.

"The talks were kicked off last year and they are undergoing final negotiations for price and ownership interests," said Zhu, adding details may be available next month.

Dongfeng announced previously that it would have a controlling share in the new company after the participation of Renault. The French automaker is supposed to contribute technology, branding, products and some capital to the venture.

The agreement is pending approval by Chinese regulatory authorities, and Volvo has said that the goal was for the agreement to be finalized this year.

The restructured Dongfeng Liuzhou is expected to start manufacturing Renault trucks in the second half of this year and mass production may start next year. (Xinhua)

Xinhua Financial Plans Overseas IPO by Next January

Xinhua Financial Network, an affiliate of China's official Xinhua News Agency, announced Sunday it was seeking to list as early as next January in one of the first overseas IPOs involving a mainland media company.

The financial services and media company is considering listing in Hong Kong, Tokyo or New York in the next 12 to 24 months, a spokesman said.

"Our company is expanding and we need funds. Listing is one of the options but we have not decided where," the spokesman continued.

The company, whose largest shareholder is Xinhua with a 20 percent stake, has been on an expansion spree since it acquired the Asian arm of financial information provider AFX from Agence France-Presse a year ago.

Last December, the company said it planned to buy the New York-based news agency Market News International. In November, the company raised \$20 million on international markets for further expansion plans.

It did state that all proceeds would be used for future business development, including acquisitions. Founded in 1999, the Hong Kong-based company distributes Chinese and Asia equity markets news and manages China-related stock market indices in a joint venture with FTSE. (Xinhua)

TCL Listing Bonanza for Stockholders

By Ju Ming

TCL Group's listing on the Shenzhen Stock Exchange last Friday was a win-win event for the company and its shareholders. The company received an injection of needed capital as it pushes for a place on the global market, while a few major shareholders became overnight millionaires when the value of TCL's stock shot to nearly three times its issuing price in its first day on the market.

Trading of the company's shares opened at 6.88 yuan, 2.62 yuan higher than the issuing price, peaked at 7.84 yuan and closed at 7.59 yuan, a 78.17 percent rise from the issuing price.

TCL founder Li Dongsheng and nine others were among those to ride the stock surge to millionaire status. Li's personal assets are believed to have risen to nearly 1.1 billion yuan by the end of trading on the bonanza day. Once some restricted shares are approved for trading or cash conversion, many other top managers are likely to join the ranks of the new rich at the electronics manufacturer.

Bird Flu Claims Another Life

February 4, Hanoi (AFP) - A 16-year-old girl has died from bird flu in Vietnam, health officials said, taking the death toll here to 12 people out of 16 confirmed infections.

The teenager from the southern Mekong Delta province of Soc Trang died Tuesday at Ho Chi Minh City's Hospital for Tropical Disease, its deputy director, Tran Tinh Hien, said.

"She was admitted to hospital on January 26 and tested positive for the H5N1 strain of avian influenza," he told AFP.

In human terms, Vietnam is the worst affected of 10 Asian nations tackling outbreaks of bird flu. Thailand, where five people had died from the H5N1 virus, is the only other country to have confirmed human infections.

WHO spokesman Bob Dietz said the organization needed to examine the results of the tests carried out on the latest victim before making any public comment.

Of the 16 people confirmed to have been infected with the virus, two have made a complete recovery, but an eight-year-old girl and a 20-year-old woman are both hospitalised in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi respectively.

Dozens of others are also suspected of contracting the virus, some of whom have already died but were never tested for bird flu.

The WHO has warned that the H5N1 virus could kill mil-

lions across the globe if it combined with a human influenza virus to create a new highly contagious strain transmissible among humans.

It says the further culling of birds, a ban on poultry imports from affected areas and improved hygiene measures are essential to containing the virus.

More than 14 million chickens have died or been culled across Vietnam, with the disease believed to have been passed on to humans through direct contact with sick birds or their droppings.

Analyst's Take:

Bird flu has struck with unprecedented virulence in 10 Asian countries including South Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos and China. It's believed to be potentially an even greater threat than SARS, so the economy of Southeast Asia is facing a severe test. Containing the outbreak is crucial.

At the beginning of this year, people were optimistic about the economic prospects in Southeast Asia. In particular, rapid growth was expected in Thailand and Vietnam. But now bird flu has hit these two countries the hardest. It has led to the culling or deaths of 18 million chickens in Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam and Laos and it is still spreading.

The income of poultry-breeding farmers has dropped severely; more than 81,000 farms have suffered direct losses from the

outbreak of bird flu.

Thailand is the fourth-largest poultry exporter in the world. It shipped about 500,000 tons of chicken, worth US\$1.3 billion, in 2003 and planned to export 600,000 tons this year. Japan and the European Union are its biggest export markets for poultry. But now the EU and Japan have announced bans on poultry imports from bird flu countries. The Department of Agriculture in Thailand thinks it will be at least six months before foreign importers start importing Thai poultry again.

Investment in the poultry industry, and also the catering and tourism industries, has been seriously undermined. Tour services in the US, England and Asia have said bookings to bird flu countries have dropped. Inevitably, it's had an impact on the exchange rate and stock market. The currencies of Thailand and Indonesia dropped sharply after the bird flu outbreak and Thailand's stock market is still falling.

Although Southeast Asia is facing a severe challenge from bird flu, this challenge has not yet turned into a full-scale economic crisis. Hopefully, the tough preventive measures taken by the bird flu countries and the prompt culling of chickens can prevent the further spread of the outbreak, so the economic impact can be limited and temporary.

- Xu Ningning, consultant of the ASEAN-China Business Council

Winners and Losers

Brazil Nears Exports Record

February 2, Sao Paulo (Dow Jones) - Just one month into 2004, it looks like Brazil may set a new record for annual exports, though a stronger dollar later this year could put a damper on the boom.

Average daily meat exports jumped 38.2% as Brazilian companies took advantage of growing demand for chicken from outside Asia and beef from outside the US.

Asia's chicken producers have been slammed by an avian flu outbreak. US beef was banned in December by major markets worldwide after the discovery of a cow in Washington state infected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or mad cow disease.

Asia's bird flu crisis could boost exports even more. Brazil's chicken exporters association, or Abef, predicts that chicken export volumes could rise 10% as a result of the crisis. Most economists haven't yet revised their export and trade balance projections to reflect the impact of bird flu on Brazil, which is the world's leading chicken exporter.

Medical Gloves All the Rage

January 30, (IHT) - Shares of Top Glove have gained 16 percent this month as Asia's struggle with severe acute respiratory syndrome and bird flu underpins the Malaysian company's plans to increase sales of its disposable medical gloves.

Top Glove's shares tripled in 2003 as it raised production to 7.2 billion rubber and vinyl gloves, used by medical workers to examine infectious patients and in clean rooms in electronics plants. This year, says the managing director, Lim Wee Chai, the company plans to make more than 9 billion gloves, challenging Dallas, Texas-based Kimberly-Clark as the world's No.1 supplier of gloves for medical use.

Investors such as Teng Ngiek Lian, chief executive at Target Asset Management in Singapore, say that even without the latest disease outbreaks, Top Glove is headed for further stock market gains.



Pixar Earnings Soar

February 4, Los Angeles (Reuters) - Pixar Animation Studios Inc. claimed the mantle of world's top animated filmmaker from Walt Disney Co. on Wednesday after posting record quarterly income from runaway DVD sales of "Finding Nemo."

Chief Executive Steve Jobs made clear his company's relationship with Disney would end when their distribution deal ran out in 2005, calling Disney's latest animated films duds and its sequels embarrassing. "We think the Pixar brand is now the most powerful and trusted brand in animation," Jobs said.

Fish story "Finding Nemo" was the top US film at the box office last year and has \$850 million in total ticket sales to date, making it the ninth-biggest draw worldwide ever. By the end of the year, it sold 24.8 million home videos and DVDs.

Citigroup in China Quest

February 4, Shanghai (Reuters) - Citigroup Inc. flew in its top executives to promote its first credit card in China on Wednesday, underscoring how the world's largest financial services group is bent on expansion in the country.

The New York-based company wants to boost its presence in a \$1.3 trillion savings market currently limited by myriad regulations. It's also eager to get a bigger slice of the country's upcoming share and bond sales.

Citigroup, which has 1,000 of its 290,000 global work force in mainland China and just five branches, is competing with British rivals HSBC Holdings Plc and Standard Chartered to break into a sector that will open to foreign competition by 2007.

Mad Cow Risk Remains in US

February 4, Riverdale, Md. (Reuters) - A panel of international experts said on Wednesday there was a "high probability" that more cases of mad cow disease exist in American cattle, a finding that sent US cattle prices plummeting and drew protests from the embattled \$27 billion cattle industry.

The panel, appointed by US Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman, also recommended that the US government tighten its oversight of the livestock feed industry and ban cattle brains and spinal material in all feed and pet food as a safeguard.

The panel was formed after the United States' first case of the brain-wasting disease was reported in a Holstein dairy cow in Washington state on December 23.

Techs Drag Down Wall Street

February 4, New York (AFP) - US stocks slumped, after a weak outlook from computer networking giant Cisco Systems dragged down the technology sector as well as the broader market.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average moved off its worst level of the session but remained down 7.4 points (0.07 percent) at 10,497.78, while the tech-heavy Nasdaq composite tumbled 30.86 points (1.49 percent) to 2,035.35 at 1630 GMT. The broad-market Standard and Poor's 500 index dipped 4.99 points (0.44 percent) to 1,131.04.

Economic news was mostly favorable and helped limit the losses.

EU to Fine Microsoft \$125 Million

February 3 (TechWeb) - Microsoft will face a fine of about 100 million euros - roughly US\$125 million - for its alleged anti-competitive behavior, a German newspaper reported on Monday.

The software giant says it continues to negotiate with European regulators to settle the overseas antitrust case, but the 100 million euro fine is part of a draft decision issued last week, according to *Die Welt*, a major daily Germany newspaper.

The European Commission confirmed late last week the existence of a draft decision on the matter. However, Microsoft continues to negotiate with overseas regulators to settle the case, according to company spokesman Jim Desler.

Trans-Australia Train



February 2, Alice Springs, Australia (AP) - Rolling through vistas of red sand and spiky bushes, the first passenger train to traverse Australia from south to north rumbled past the halfway point of its journey deep in the Outback on Monday.

Christened "The Ghan," after the Afghan camel drivers who helped build the

first railroad from Australia's south coast, the train arrived in the central city of Alice Springs on time at noon, 24 hours after leaving Adelaide.

While an east-west link between Sydney on Australia's east coast and Perth on the West Australian coast has existed for years, this is the first time north and south have been connected.

AP Photo

Ticket to the Moon

January 30 (Space.com) - While President Bush's vision of ambitious interplanetary missions has generated worldwide debate over whether private industry should play a bigger role in space exploration, one company is poised to answer the question with an enthusiastic thud later this year.

Thousands of people have paid to have messages, business cards, art or ashes of loved ones sent to the Moon on the Trailblazer robotic probe, which if successful will slam into the lunar surface and squash any doubt about the looming commercialization of space.

The mission is a private venture of California-based TransOrbital Inc., which is also drawing on corporate sponsorships and advertising to fund the effort.

After years of delay, launch is now slated for this fall, company President Dennis Laurie said in a telephone interview yesterday.

Individuals can book items for the flight at the company's web site, transorbital.net. Sending a business card to the Moon costs \$2,500. Other relics or mementos can fly for \$2,500 per gram. A



text message costs \$17.

Meanwhile, TransOrbital appears to be the only company on the verge of launching a privately funded spacecraft beyond Earth orbit. Yet because the company is private, it is not known with certainty whether it is financially prepared for liftoff.

In a test in 2002 from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, TransOrbital put a dummy craft into orbit using a Russian Dnepr rocket. The same setup will be used for the Moon launch.

Additional revenue could come from Trailblazer's lunar map, which will be the highest resolution ever and could help NASA and other private firms plan future lunar forays, he said.

The mission is expected to cost less than \$20 million.

Bring in the Banks

February 1, Baghdad (Reuters) - Iraq's central bank said on Saturday it had given licenses to the National Bank of Kuwait and Britain's Standard Chartered and HSBC, heralding the entry of foreign banks into the country for the first time in decades.

"They can start operations as of the middle of March. There will be another three foreign licenses announced shortly," an aide to central bank governor Sinan al-Shabibi told Reuters.

The US-installed monetary authorities have invited international banks to apply for six five-year licenses. Each of the 15 foreign banks that applied pledged to have minimum capital in Iraq of \$25 million.

Saddam Hussein allowed private Iraqi banks to operate in the 1990s, but 13 years of UN sanctions and over-regulation have damaged the banking system, which badly lags behind the rest of the world.

Few had the confidence to make deposits in Iraqi banks, especially in dollars, and most of the country's 26 million people keep their

money at home, protected by an AK-47 assault rifle, or in Jordanian and Lebanese banks.

Analyst's Take:

Before the Iraq war, six state-owned banks controlled 82 percent of the deposits in the country. Iraq's financial market has been closed for 40 years but now it is opening up to foreign banks as a step in its transition towards a market economy.

Some foreign banks in the entry queue will probably enter the market by purchasing small private banks in Iraq. Thus the banking system in the country is facing a re-organization. Foreign banks bring not only new products and services, but also competition.

The entry of foreign banks will certainly improve the service of Iraq's domestic banks, and will also boost the modernization of the country's banking, financing, and even manufacturing and construction industries.

- Wang Zheng, professor, Middle-East Research Office, Northwest University

Fowl Raisers Chickening Out



Jianchang neighborhood authorities handle two white roosters turned in by an unlicensed local raiser last Monday.

By Wang Xiaoxiao

Unlicensed raising of chickens and ducks has long posed a stubborn problem for the Beijing Municipal Administration Bureau. However, the breakout of the bird flu in Southeast Asia and southern China has all but solved the issue, as local residents have been voluntarily turning in their beloved poultry birds to municipal management offices out of fear of contracting the deadly disease.

Last Monday, a resident of the Jianchang neighborhood in Dongcheng District surnamed Liu went to the Dongcheng branch of the administration bureau and turned over two large white roosters he had been raising for over a year. Liu told *Beijing Youth Daily* last Monday that he won the birds at

a temple fair game last year and subsequently hid them from authorities' eyes in a cage on a balcony at his home. Now that the birds had grown into mature roosters, he was sad to give them up, but decided that it was better to be safe than sorry.

In Haidian District, city administrators have persuaded two restaurants to kill over 20 chickens raised on or near their premises. Another team talked an elderly couple in Xisanqi into destroying five chickens they kept at their homes and thoroughly disinfecting their little henhouse.

The bird flu has been a particularly bitter pill to swallow for normally popular fast food chain KFC. "We're not nearly as busy as before, especially at mealtimes. Many peo-

ple are afraid to eat chicken. I just hope the bird flu passes as SARS did," a cashier at a KFC outlet in Chongwenmen, who requested anonymity, admitted.

Smaller stores, such as a seller of Taiwan-style fried chicken in Chongwenmen, have been harder hit and closed down.

While public fear of bird flu has not reached epidemic proportions, few people are willingly eating chicken. "I'm not buying any chicken these days, even though my kids like it. This is a special time and we all have to be careful. The chicken in this supermarket is probably safe, but I don't want to take any risks," a shopper at the New World Supermarket surnamed Liu told *Beijing Today* on Wednesday night.

New 'Quack House' Coming to Shishahai

By Yu Shanshan

Shishahai in central Beijing is set to become a far more hospitable place to ducks this spring thanks to the effects of one local waterfowl lover.

Qu Xisheng has personally paid for the construction of an 80-square-meter artificial island that will be floated on the lake, hopefully before domestic ducks begin to migrate back north. The house, currently being built in Changzhou, Jiangsu Province, will have room to accommodate 50 female ducks and provide them safe space to lay and incubate eggs.

Qu's affection for ducks began early in the spring of 2000, when, while working at his father's boat rental business at Shishahai, he was surprised to discover four wild ducks on the lake. A few days later, he found the ducks had made the lake their new home and even laid eggs on one of his boats.

He set his mind to giving the wild ducks a better home, and over the next couple years, built them a floating platform made of bamboo. As the number of wild ducks drawn to the lake in spring grew, exceeding 50 birds, and even some wild egrets and mandarin ducks made appearances, Qu renovated the duck house and expanded its size to 40 square meters. He spruced it up with some small shacks and roofed-in nesting areas, along with little wooden fences.

Although Qu did his best to maintain the house, it deteriorated to a dangerous degree by the end of last year. In the hopes of getting the ducks to return, Qu and Lin Yi, director of the Shishahai administrative committee, concocted a plan for a more advanced platform, crafted of fiberglass and twice the size of the original. On top of the platform will be built enough shacks and nest enclosures to meet the needs of at least 50 mother ducks.

According to a *Beijing Morning Post* report on Tuesday, the oval platform, which can support up to 10 tons in weight, will be divided into five parts for transport and will take two days to reassemble once it reaches Shishahai. Qu said he expected the house to be usable for around 30 years.



A repairman pumps water off the submerged section of the West Second Ring Road on Saturday.

Weekend Washout Burst water pipe disrupts traffic

By Zhang Ran

A water pipe that burst caused heavy traffic congestion and some property loss along the West Second Ring Road on Saturday.

At 11 am that morning, a meter-high geyser of water suddenly blew into the air and 300 meters of the second ring access road, from Guanyuanqiao to Xizhimenqiao, were quickly covered by water. By 11:50, the pooled water was very deep, making use of the access road impossible and leading to a terrible traffic snarl along the West Second Ring Road.

According to Zhao Jing, manager of the water supply company under Beijing Water Corp., the are three possible reasons the pipe burst. It may have been a result of the high pressure of being under the heavily-trafficked access road, of different pipes pressing together, or its proximity to a pedestrian underpass.

At 1 o'clock that afternoon, all water pipes along the east side of the area's pipe network were shut off for repair, and workers managed to plug the leak and patch the burst pipe by 4 pm. Asked why the repair took so long, Zhao explained, "Before we could close the pipes, we had to check with People's Hospital, located in the area, which was using water from the east pipe at the time. Once we confirmed that the hospital still had water supply, then we could shut off the pipes."



Mr. Yang learned a harsh lesson about fences.

Panda Bites Back

By Ju Ming

Keepers at the Beijing zoo were just as surprised as university student Xiao Yang (pseudonym) on Sunday afternoon when a panicked panda, named Gini, savagely bit his leg. The wounded young man was immediately sent to the hospital, and according to a report in the *Beijing Evening News* on Monday, he is in stable condition and has been transferred from the Jishuitan Hospital to Beijing University Hospital for further treatment.

Xiao, 22, admitted to the *Beijing Evening News* reporter that in order to get a closer look at or pet the sleeping panda, he jumped into her enclosure, a blatant violation of zoo regulations and common sense. Gini awoke and immediately attacked the intruder as he tried to escape back over the wall. A doctor at Jishuitan hospital who oversaw his emergency treatment was quoted in the report as saying, "Xiao had over 10 two-centimeter wounds in his legs and feet."

An unnamed zookeeper said that Xiao should consider himself lucky. "Most pandas are relatively mild tempered. If he had pulled that stunk with a strong male panda, he would have been more seriously hurt," he added.

The zookeeper noted that even professional handlers are careful about approaching pandas taking one of their frequent naps. Moreover, he noted that the silly student's intrusion was almost certainly considered an invasion of territory by the angered bear.

"Something like this happened 10 years ago," the zookeeper said, "but that person was found to be mentally ill. Luckily, he was quickly rescued before he got hurt." Since then the zoo has put up clear warning signs around the panda enclosures and formulated regulations to ensure visitors' safety, yet such protective steps are sometimes ignored by curious zoo-goers.

"Visitors themselves are the cause of the most of the injuries to people and animals at the zoo," said Wang Hongsheng, manager of the zoo's popular science department.

Liu Xinwen, a professor at the China University of Political Science and Law, told the *Beijing Morning Post* on Monday that although the wounded student bore the majority of responsibility in the incident, the railing around the cage was undoubtedly also a factor. Ideally, he added, such a guard rail should be impossible for visitors to cross.



Gini normally only bites shoots and leaves.



Liu Xiaolingtong is the fourth generation of master Monkey King actor in his family.

Master Seeking New Generation of Monkey Kings

By Wang Xiaoxiao

Though still beloved by children around this country and beyond, the future of China's mythic Monkey King is in some danger. After performing at CCTV's huge Spring Festival Gala show on January 21, actor Liu Xiaolingtong (real name Zhang Jinlai), a famed portrayer of the legendary monkey and upholder of a vital family history of playing that role, publicized his fears that the Liu reputation for monkeying around may be nearing its end.

For four generations, members of Liu's family have performed the role of the Monkey King, or Sun Wukong, in Beijing Opera shows and elsewhere. Liu earned a name for himself by performing in the first TV version of the *Journey to the West*, broadcast in the 1980s. However, because he has no son and has not trained any apprentices, Liu could be the last Monkey King star of his family.

"Actually, among my brothers, I was not the best Monkey King actor when I was young. My father played the role professionally and were always aping him. My elder brother Zhang Jinxing was thought to have a natural

gift for playing the role, but sadly he died from leukemia when only 17. The burden of carrying on the family tradition fell to me, and I had to do it," Liu was quoted as saying in *Beijing Youth Daily* on February 1.

Liu has a 13-year-old daughter, but has said that he would not push her to carry on the tradition as she has her own interests and dreams.

Shortly after reports over Liu's concerns were published, responses from hundreds of children around the country poured in, pleading their willingness to learn to play the Monkey King. Over 100 kids from Shanghai alone expressed their wishes to become Liu's apprentices.

The veteran actor has been seeking a successor for years, but has yet to find a satisfactory candidate. Liu said an ideal apprentice should be around eight years old, not too tall and have a thin face, big eyes and quick reflexes. "I would be willing to teach anyone if they were right for the role and passionate about it, even a foreigner," he noted. Prospective monkey men can get more information through Liu's website at <http://monkeywed.mylang.com>.

Sex Shop Stiffed on Mu Zimei Proposal

By Ju Ming / Dong Nan

A Beijing man surnamed Yang is concerned about the prospects of his newly opened store, a retailer of adult products located in the Qiaozhuang Shangyiejie neighborhood in Tongzhou District. He set up the store hoping to capitalize on the national notoriety of writer Mu Zimei by giving it her name, but his application to register that title was turned down by the local Bureau of Industry and Commerce on January 20.

After checking with the Liyuan Industrial and Commercial Administration Bureau of Tongzhou, Yang, who refused to disclose his full name, learned that words such as "sex" have been barred from storefronts since the end of 2003. Desperate for a catchy name, he settled on the Muzimei Commercial and Trade Center. "I thought that everyone would know what the name meant and therefore know what I am selling," Yang told the *Beijing Times* on February 1.

Mu Zimei is the penname of a Guangzhou-based columnist. Over the past few months, she has become a topic of tremendous national attention and debate for publishing vivid descriptions on the Internet of her

many purported sexual liaisons with different men, including some celebrities.

On January 17, Yang filed his application for a business license with the Liyuan Industrial and Commercial Administration Bureau, which transferred the papers to the Tongzhou District Industrial and Commercial Administration Bureau the same day. Only three days later, the bureau informed Yang of their rejection of the application on the grounds that Muzimei was a commonly-used cyber-name on the Internet, so it could not be used as the title of any shop.

"I think the name Muzimei conforms to related regulations. There are no specific rules that ban the use of Internet aliases," Yang complained.

An officer from the Tongzhou District Industrial and Commercial Administration Bureau who requested anonymity admitted to the *Beijing Times* that the name Muzimei did not violate registration regulations. In fact, he said, the Tongzhou bureau made the decision out of concern that use of the Muzimei title could have some kind of negative social impact.



Zhou Zhengyi



Li Haicang



Yang Bin

The Death List

In the transitional process from a planned economy to a market-oriented economy, accumulation of private wealth has taken place under incomplete legislation and accompanied by widespread layoffs and unemployment. The Forbes China Rich List is jokingly referred to as a "death list" for the affluent. Some tycoons on the list have, in the last few years, been targeted by the authorities for various financial and tax problems. Here are a few on the list:

Zhou Zhengyi: former chairman of Nongkai Group and Shanghai's wealthiest man. He was arrested last summer and charged with manipulating share prices and falsifying figures.

Yang Bin: Chinese-Dutch business tycoon. Yang was sentenced to 18 years in prison, plus a fine of 2.3 million yuan (about US\$277,100) after being convicted of fraud by the Intermediate People's Court of Shenyang City, capital of northeast China's Liaoning Province, on July 14, 2003. The charges listed in the court verdict related to his property and horticulture business, include the forging of documents, fraudulent contracts, bribery and the illegal use of land.

Li Haicang: chairman of Shanxi Haixin Steel Group, noted private entrepreneur and vice-chairman of the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce. On January 22, 2003, Li was shot in his hometown, Yuncheng city in Shanxi province, north China.

Ill Gotten Gains?

New regulation sparks controversy

By Zhang Ran

On January 2, a highly controversial document was passed into law by the local government in Hebei Province. The paper, drafted by the Hebei provincial Committee of Politics and Legal Affairs, was titled "Decisions of Legal Department Concerning Creation of a Better Socialist Market-oriented Economic System."

The ensuing uproar centered around the seventh item in the paper which stipulated that criminal behavior by private businesses could only be prosecuted within a given period. Even if litigation is brought during this time, the judgment must take into account the attitude of the criminals and whether they show due penance.

China Youth Daily said it amounted to government absolution of "sin" in private Chinese businesses. A dispute has raged since over whether the new law is too soft on criminal business practices.

Responding to the press, Hebei Provincial Committee of Politics and Legal Affairs announced that the document is intended to help the development of Hebei's private economy. Further documents will be issued in due course to explain the regulation.

Mao Yushi, renowned economist

Basically, I embrace the decision. Our country is in a transitional period and laws, even the constitution, are in a state of constant change. In the next National People's Congress (NPC), the wording "the dictatorship of the proletariat" will be consigned to history. One cannot use an outdated law to regulate society.

This should not be an excuse for embezzlement and bribery, but there is still a gap between existing laws and social justice. For example, there was a case involving a man named Sun Dawu who was sent to prison even though he hadn't harmed anyone. [Sun was sentenced to three years in jail and four years' probation last November for "illegally raising funds", as reported in *Beijing Today*, July 25, 2003]. Current law does not necessarily reflect social justice.

Sun Dawu, Chairman of DaWu Group, Xushui County, Hebei Province

I have read the paper, and I find

it bewildering. I do hope government can protect private entrepreneurs. However, I need a further understanding of the paper. Sometimes the truth is on one side, sometimes it may be on both sides. It may even be that both sides are unreasonable. That is all I can say. **Zhang Jian, retired worker from Shijiazhuang, capital of Hebei province**

In their initial stages, many new private business are involved in tax evasion, fraud and other illegal conduct. The Hebei government has issued this paper to provide blanket protection for private businesses. It is beneficial for the development of private business as well as for the state. If many private businesses are prosecuted, private business will suffer a lot and so will state income. So generally, I think this is more beneficial than harmful.

2) Criminal behavior?

Bao Yujun Chairman of China Private Enterprises Research Association

The economy should be operated by private units instead of government. Without private Chinese enterprises, how can laid-off state enterprise workers find work? People's hostility to the wealthy classes should not focus on private entrepreneurs who have built their wealth from nothing while excusing officials and state enterprise managers who became rich by embezzling public money.

I have read the whole paper and I think it will be important for the development of the Hebei economy. Nowadays, legal departments frequently conduct improper prosecutions and confiscations against private business, especially in Hebei province. This decision by Hebei government will help regulate the improper behavior of legal departments.

The purpose of the paper is to assist the development of China's economy. I am angry with the press putting a label of "absolution of sin" on it. People who hold this view are missing the point. Without an understanding of the whole paper, just picking one point to attack, the censure of *China Youth Daily* is irresponsible.

Yang Zaixue, director of the Enterprise Supervision Section, Beijing Industry and Commerce Bureau

"Sin" is a religious term, which can be interpreted here as the crim-

inal behavior conducted by private businesses before the birth of market-oriented law and regulation. It can be divided into two different situation:

First, behavior that's legal today was illegal yesterday. For example, before the amendment of the constitution in the 1980s, private business itself was illegal. I



Sun Dawu

was in the Shanxi Industry and Commerce Bureau at that time, and private units operated under various names to avoid legal charges. However, with the progress towards a market-oriented economy, these illegal units have achieved legal status.

The second kind of sinful behavior is the embezzling of state assets and seeking wealth through bribery and fraud. This, of course, should be prosecuted.

Zhu Jiuju, lawyer of Beijing Bojinghong Law Office

The so called "sin" has its political background. During the process of reform and opening up, conservatives condemned people who were trying to become rich. However, this is a religious and ethical concept, and it is improper in describing legal procedures.

"Sin" refers to everyone, not just private entrepreneurs. If everyone is born sinful, then what is wrong with those who have managed their own wealth better than others?

Those who use the term "sin" just want to confiscate private property and turn it back into state assets. Then we will return to a bureaucratic economy again.

3) Is the government exceeding its authority?

Zhu Jiuju, lawyer with Beijing Bojinghong Law Office

This paper shows how legislation in China is still incomplete. It is improper for the Hebei government, especially the Committee of Politics and Law, to issue legal documents. It intervenes in judicial procedure. In China, only the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress has the right to change the law.

Yang Zaixue, director of the Enterprise Supervision Section, Beijing Industry and Commerce Bureau

This is improper behavior on the part of the Hebei government. Only the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress has the right to intervene in the legal process.

Hu Xingdou, professor of law in the School of Humanities, Beijing Industry of Technology

In reality, the paper issued by the local government is beneficial. Generally speaking, I support it. There have been quite a few cases in Hebei province, for example Sun Dawu, that have pointed up the need for this kind of intervention. The paper will help change the local government's image among the public.

By Wang Xiaoxiao

Were you satisfied with your native language lessons when you were young? Did you ever wish for different books? One Chinese teacher, Yan Lingjun, is betting that there's a market in China for more flexible learning materials. He has written a series of Chinese teaching books called "*Reading for the Youth*".

The books have been published recently by the Commercial Press, the first time the press has published textbooks written by a single person. Unlike traditional Chinese textbooks, which have been studied for decades, "*Reading for the Youth*" has seven books, each with its own topic, including religion, history, philosophy, science and art. Another difference is that the books include references to foreign literature and authors, from Pericles of ancient Greece or Rousseau of the French Renaissance to Czech novelist Franz Kafka. The books also talk about the Bible and the works of Einstein. Instead of just focusing on Chinese literary articles, Yan Lingjun wants the books to be a window onto the world.

Another selling point is that the books even include some lyrics from pop music such as "*Childhood*" by Luo Dayou and some of Cui Jian's songs.

Now the books are being used as teaching materials in

Happy Learning

some middle schools in Guangdong Province and Yan Lingjun hopes they can be widely used across the whole country someday. But some other teachers are not so delighted about the new books, thinking the articles selected are of widely different levels and that some are not suitable for education.

Do we really need to change the standard Chinese teaching materials? Do the current books really match the students' tastes? What are foreign textbooks like?

Opinions follow:

Yan Lingjun, author of "*Reading for the Youth*"

Chinese teaching shouldn't just encompass literary value; it should widen our students' visions. I want to give them books they would like to read. Traditional textbooks emphasize literary quality. But to me, whether it's good for a student's growth is the point. Chinese lessons should be about culture, not just literature.

Feng Aizhen, director of education publishing department of Commercial Press

We published Yan Lingjun's books because we think they are of great value as reading for students. Although there is a big selection of reading for

students now, it has not been systematically collected in one series of books. Sometimes, our students have to spend quite a lot of time searching for books of different fields but "*Reading for the Youth*" has helped collect articles about nearly every respect for students. It's very important for students to read something outside the remit of their textbooks because what they learn in school can't always reflect the whole world.

Tanja, a German who teaches German in Germany

German was my favorite subject when I was in school. That's why I became a German teacher. Sometimes I was interested in the texts. But the articles in our textbook were not always so interesting, so my German teacher brought us some other books and told us to buy books ourselves. Sometimes we used articles from newspapers, but I didn't find them so good.

Zhang Yunyan, a senior Chinese teacher in Guang Qumen middle school

As a Chinese teacher, I'm facing a dilemma. On the one hand, I have to teach my students according to the textbooks because the examination has a close connection with the

books. On the other hand, the students need something much more interesting and practical, but that's precisely what the textbooks lack. We are longing for an innovation in textbooks. The articles are too old. Students are more interested in funny stories. It's wise for Yan Lingjun to add some lyrics in the books, because lyrics are also a kind of literature and are more easily accepted by students. Unfortunately, we teachers have no right to choose what we teach. If it was so, the Chinese lessons would be much better than they are right now.

Zorro Menta, a Romanian, 35

The teaching materials in Romania were very boring for me when I was in school. Most of the articles were just selected from the point of view of setting examinations. So I can't remember so well what we learned. One thing I do remember is the fairy tale Tinerete Fara Baranete si Viata Farade Moarte (Youth will never get old, life will never end). Though it's just a fairy tale, I guess I can say I learned something.

Nolan Taylor, an Englishman

I don't like English lessons partly because I like maths more, partly because of the teachers and the teaching materials. Sometimes, you can't put all the blame on the texts; the teachers should make them funny and easy to learn. So if you find the teaching of the native language a little bit hard now, you have to improve

not only the materials but also the teaching.

Zhang Xuan, a Chinese studying in Australia

I still have Chinese lessons here and our teachers are all Chinese as well. But I find the teaching is quite different from China. We don't have textbooks. Our teacher just uses all kinds of articles. Some of them are sections of novels. And to practice our writing, we are always asked to write a plan. For instance, a travel plan may include a time schedule, cost and some other details. Last time a plan schedule took me two weeks. I have to search for information all the time and I think to make a perfect plan requires not only skill in writing but also the ability to collect information. To me it's more practical than the way I was taught in China. Besides, we also have oral Chinese tests. I used to think this was ridiculous but now I know how important it is to express what you think correctly.

Li Lin, a college student

I was never impressed by the articles in our Chinese teaching materials. I don't like learning classical Chinese as I don't think it's of any use today. I can't even remember one title of the texts I've learned. Perhaps, it's better to add more funny stories so students find it more interesting to read. When I was young, I felt that I was forced to read things I didn't like.

By Dong Nan

It's no surprise to hear that more and more Chinese people are studying English these days. College students take more time to learn English and memorize new words, and English training schools such as Xindongfang (New Orientation) and Huaerjie (Wall Street) never suffer a shortage of applicants. But according to a public survey by sina.com, more than 78% of people don't see why it's necessary for Chinese people to devote such efforts to learning English.

It ain't easy

The survey, which began on January 8 and involved 20,000 people, found that Chinese people spend an inordinate amount of money and time learning English.

When asked "How much money have you spent on learning English and taking exams in the subject", almost one half said they had paid "thousands of yuan"; more than a third had paid "hundreds of yuan", and one tenth said they had paid "tens of thousands of yuan".

More than 10,000 college graduates answered the question, "Which subject took up most of your time during your college days?" Surprisingly, 70% said English, with less than one fifth saying their major took up most of their time. Some 4% said computer courses were their main focus.

So did these efforts pay off? More than one half of the participants in the survey were unhappy with the English level they achieved, saying it was only "just so-so". One third said they only knew "a little", while less than one tenth said they were "good at English". At least there was a confident minority, 2.4% declaring that their English was "perfect".

Meanwhile, 43% said they had little use for their English skills in their jobs; 28% said they used English "sometimes", while only 16% said they "often used it" and 12% said they were "always" using English.

In China, it's supposed to be mandatory for government officials to achieve a certain basic level of English in order to gain promotion. However, when asked "do you think government officials need to know some English?" nearly one half of the survey respondents did not think so.

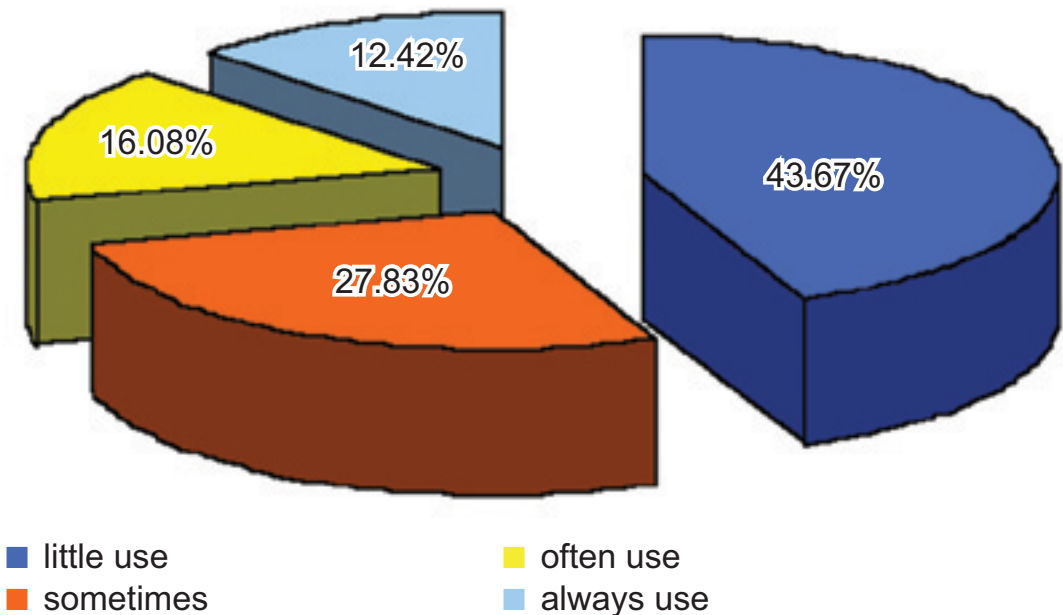
On a brighter note, it seems good English skills might help your love life — 37% of the participants admitted they hoped to find a spouse who was good at English.

No choice

So why do people spend so much money and time learning English when it's only vital in a relatively small number of careers? More than one half of the

Why Must We Learn English?

Do you need English in you daily work?

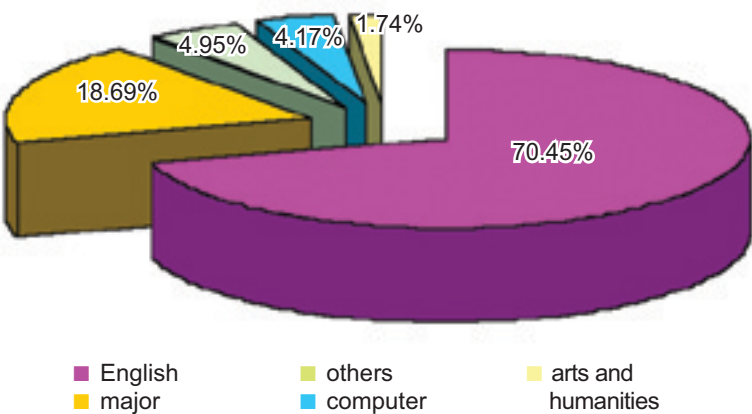


people in the survey said it was because of examinations.

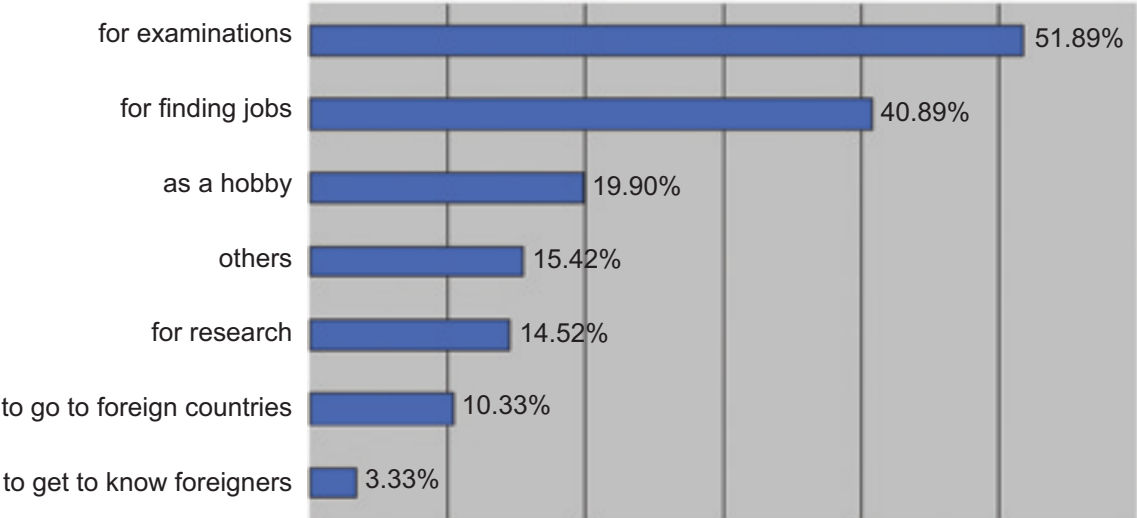
Chinese students are wearily familiar with CET (College English Test). CET-4 and CET-6 are the most authoritative English examinations in China. CET-4 is generally for undergraduate level and CET-6 is for postgraduate level. Since CET-4 and CET-6 are considered important indexes of students' academic level, many colleges and universities regulate that an undergraduate who does not pass CET-4 cannot receive their diploma, the same applying to postgraduates who fail to pass CET-6. But the National Ministry of Education does not have such a regulation.

And the course required to pass the examination is pretty demanding. According to the survey, 32% of the participants failed to pass CET-4, even after

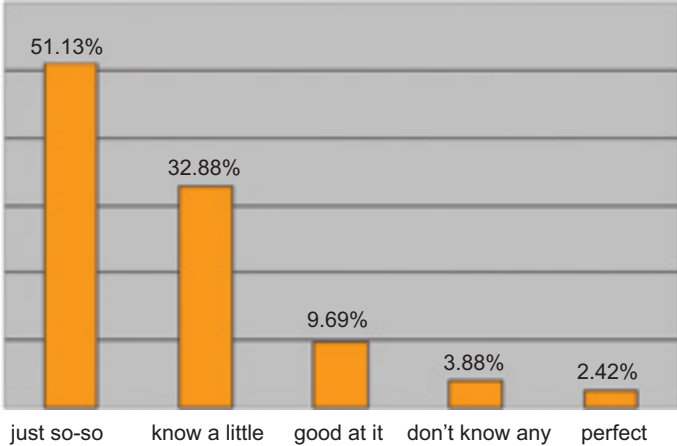
Which subject took up most of your time during your college days?



Why did you learn English?



How do you rate your English level?



several attempts; 26% had to take CET-4 many times before passing while only 41% passed it first time.

This might explain why more than 70% in the survey agreed that "passing CET-4 and CET-6 should not be a requirement for receiving a diploma"; 57% wanted to do away with the exams completely.

"It is unfair for colleges to take passing CET-4 as a compulsory qualification for getting a diploma, since the national government does not have such a regulation," complained Lin, a college graduate, to *Beijing Today*. Lin was a student of Chinese literature and passed CET-4 in his fourth year at college after failing it twice.

"Everybody knows that whether a student gets their diploma should depend on their major, rather than English. And not every major or trade requires you to know English well. But to pass CET-4, I almost didn't have any time left to study my major," he says.

Another thing that makes people angry about CET-4 and CET-6 is that they attach more importance to reading, writing and grammar, without paying much attention to listening and speaking skills.

"I passed CET-6 when I was a junior student," said Liang Dan, a 28-year-old employee of a foreign company to *Beijing Today*. "You might think my English would be really good at that time. On the contrary, my oral English was so poor that I could not talk with foreigners after I graduated from college, and when I found my first job in a small-scale foreign company, I found my practical English was so lacking that I could not write a standard commercial letter myself" she says.

"Of course, now my oral English and communication skills

are greatly improved, but that's the result of daily training, nothing to do with what I studied for CET-4 and CET-6."

"One of my friends from the UK said there was too much grammar and fixed-phrases which was even hard for him when he read a CET-6 paper once," said Liu Jin, a college English teacher. "I agree with him, and I think CET-4 and CET-6 are training linguists rather than English users."

Reform

At the beginning of 2004, The National Ministry of Education released a reform schedule for CET-4 and CET-6, which stressed shifting the focus to testing the practical language ability of students, especially listening and speaking skills.

"We wish to build a new English teaching and testing system in two years and greatly improve students' practical ability in using English," said Zhang Yaoxue, a member of the Higher Education Office of The National Ministry of Education, at a press conference at the end of last year. However, many details of the schedule are yet to be revealed.

At the end of 2002, Fudan University in Shanghai announced passing CET-4 would no longer be compulsory for students to receive their diplomas. The measure won acclaim from both students and the public. At the end last year, some Beijing Universities including Beijing Normal University and Beijing Jiaotong University said they planned to follow suit.

"English does not come into the life of many Chinese students," said Xu Xiaoping, renowned English teacher and president of Xindongfang English School to sina.com. "But I believe improving the English level in China is important to improving our national quality."

(Source: sina.com)

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Liu Dongjiang travels between Beijing and Tianjin at least three times a week.

Photo by Tian Xiaotong

'My son's oxygen saturation had reached nearly 98 percent. They should have stopped the oxygen therapy, but they didn't. Just for money!' said Liu Dongjiang.

By Sun Ming / Wang Fang

Hu Xiaolin, a pretty eighteen-year-old country girl from Anhui Province, dreams of becoming a film star. She took the entrance examination for Beijing Film Academy on Monday but she's aware it may take more than a good grade to get in.

"I did pretty well in the examination as well as in the improvisational skit part, but I still worry a lot," Hu told *Beijing Today* on Wednesday. "There is a rumor going round that many candidates get in even if they didn't do well in the exam. They have special relationships with people in charge. However, I do not know anybody. A number of candidates have told me it is impossible to get into an art academy unless you have this kind of 'relationship'."

Since last week, a number of art academies have begun their application sessions. Many other candidates share Hu's concerns. There are literally millions of young people who apply to art academies every year hoping to become actors, performers or TV program hosts. People are no longer surprised to hear scurrilous rumors about the lengths young hopefuls go to to get into art academies.

What do I have to do?

According to the Monday news on Qianlong.com, there are three common types of underhand means of achieving success in art academy enrollment. First, the parents of the candidates use all relationships they can to contact the people in charge. Second, the parents pay a great deal of money to the academies. Third, the candidates sleep with their examiners.

Liu Jiping, the vice-secretary of the Party committee of Beijing Film Academy told *Beijing Youth Daily* on Monday that he had heard of candidates spending more than 100,000 yuan to get in. Some candidates had claimed to know people with influence who could get them into the academy in exchange for a bribe.

"Some people try to take advantage of candidates who really want to go to an art academy. They say they know people who can help them get in. In fact,



Future movie stars? Candidates wait for the examination.

Photo by Chen Bai

Doing Whatever it Takes

Art academies to crack down on enrollment abuses

these liars only make money by cheating candidates and their parents in the name of the school," *Beijing Youth Daily* quoted Liu as saying on Tuesday.

On January 14, 2004, professor Huang Dingyu, a teacher with the Performing Arts Department at the Central Academy of Drama was arrested by the police. *Huaxi Daily*, a Sichuan-based newspaper, reported on January 17 that Huang had been arrested on rape charges but that he had also taken bribes.

The newspaper revealed that Huang had a BMW and an expensive private house. The newspaper also told the story of a parent who claimed to have paid Huang a lot of money in order to get his daughter enrolled in the academy. Since his daughter is still studying, he was reluctant to disclose how much he had paid.

According to Qianlong.com, some female candidates get enrolled by sleeping with the examiners. Huang Manting, a representative from Jiangxi delegation at the 15th China Youth League Congress, told Qianlong.com that a friend of hers had applied to the Performing College of Beijing Film Academy the year before last. Her friend witnessed one ex-

aminer giving his car keys to a beautiful female candidate after the performing examination and told her where his car was parked. After hesitating for a second, this female candidate took the key and went away shyly.

Establishing discipline committees

In order to prevent such activities, Beijing Film Academy has established a discipline supervision committee this year. The members of the committee will supervise the application, examination and enrollment procedures.

Vice-secretary Liu Jiping told *Beijing Youth Daily* that this year the supervision committee will go to each room to supervise the teachers. In addition, the committee will supervise every phase of the process, such as setting questions, sealing and marking the papers.

Zhang Genxing, the director responsible for enrollment at the Beijing Broadcasting Institute told *Beijing Star Daily* on Tuesday that it was impossible for candidates to cheat through examiners, as a series of measures had been put in place.

Zhong Ping, a teacher with the Enrollment Office of China Academy of Fine Arts, told *Beijing Star Daily* that since there are more than 160 examina-

tion rooms used every year, the school does not have enough teachers to act as supervisors. But this year the school will invite students from military institutes to work as supervisors instead.

So many hopefuls

About 10,000 candidates have applied to Performing College, Beijing Film Academy this year, 20 percent more than last year. The school is only offering 100 places. The Central Academy of Drama and Beijing Broadcasting Institute face the same deluge of applications every year.

Liu Jiping, a professor at Beijing Film Academy, told *Beijing Youth Daily* that there's a never ending supply of applicants, thanks to the dream of becoming a star. But the dream of a better life is also important.

"Now parents are happy to pay for their children to study arts. So there are more candidates who want to get into academies. Before, some departments had to recruit people once every other year or every four years due to the shortage of candidates. But now, people can see there's a lot of money in films and performing, so they attract much more interest," said Liu.

An Avoidable Tragedy

Oxygen poisoning leads to blindness in premature babies

By Sun Ming

He travels between Beijing and Tianjin at least two or three times a week. He can't remember how many ophthalmic experts and law experts he has visited in the past year and a half.

"I want to prevent other families from suffering the same tragedy as mine," Liu Dongjiang, a 32-year-old father of a blind boy from Tianjin, told *Beijing Today* on Tuesday.

Liu's son, Liu Weihua, was born prematurely at seven months at Tianjin Central Gynaecology and Obstetrics Hospital in May 2002. Doctors immediately prescribed the standard procedure in this circumstance: oxygen therapy. The therapy lasted for 1,040 hours. Tragically, Liu suffered a side-effect of the treatment called retinopathy of prematurity (ROP).

"As far as I know, at least 60 premature babies in China have become blind as the result of oxygen poisoning from this treatment," said Liu.

Liu, a railway worker, claims the hospital didn't warn him of the risks and they also waited too long to check the baby's sight, thus leaving it too late to prevent ROP. Now he's collecting evidence for a legal suit against the hospital.

Creeping blindness

Liu said that he couldn't help looking at the eyes of other children. Sometimes he scared them and they started crying, he says. "I just admire them. They have bright eyes. But my kid hasn't."

Liu's son Liu Weihua weighed 1050 kilograms when he was born. Soon he was taken to the emergency ward of Tianjin Central Gynaecology and Obstetrics Hospital.

"But the hospital didn't tell me the medical risk of continuous oxygen therapy in advance. Excessive oxygen infusion can hurt the eyes and lungs of premature babies," said Liu.

Liu's son was released from the hospital 65 days after he was born. According to the medical record, he had continuously received oxygen for 1040 hours, or 43 days.

Liu and his wife took their son home on July 5 2002. Before they

left, Li Yunping, the director of the Paediatric Department of the hospital, reminded them to take their baby to receive an eye check.

The couple took their baby to the Tianjin Ophthalmic Hospital the second day.

Wei Jingwen, a renowned expert from the hospital, told Liu that his baby had ROP, and it had developed to its most serious extent. The baby's retinas had totally detached.

Wei told Liu that ROP can be easily cured if the baby receives surgery in time - between four and six weeks after being born. This time had already passed for Liu's son.

"I felt extremely depressed when I got to know that my son had missed the period for surgery and would be blind his whole life," said Liu with tears in his eyes.

Liu and his wife have taken their baby to Beijing and Shanghai many times over the past year and a half. All the doctors told them it was impossible for their baby to regain his vision. "I wanted to hear 'Your son still has hope'. But I never heard this."

Even so, with barely any hope, Liu took his baby to Shanghai for eye surgery on January 14 last year. As expected, the baby's detached retinas couldn't be fixed back in position.

"My dream was shattered completely," said Liu, covering his face with his hands.

Four premature babies from the same hospital

Last year, Liu and his wife found three other babies suffering from ROP in Beijing.

"It was very surprising. There were so many coincidences," said Liu. The four children, two boys and two girls, were all born prematurely in the Tianjin Central Gynaecology and Obstetrics Hospital. They all had received a long period of oxygen therapy. They were all born between November 2001 and July 2002.

"Within nine months, the same hospital released four premature babies who were all blind. Can you believe it?" said Liu. Liu began to realize that this was not just a tragedy for his and a few other families.

In 2002, Liu and the other three



Liu's mother Wang Guimin and her grandson Liu Weihua
Photo by Zhu Yu

fathers, Yang Deshan, Yue Jun and Li Yongcheng, brought separate lawsuits against Tianjian Central Gynaecology and Obstetrics Hospital. They didn't sue the hospital jointly.

"We were afraid that the court wouldn't accept our lawsuit if we brought a lawsuit against the hospital jointly. The hospital is very influential in Tianjin," said Liu.

Waiting for medical authentication

Yuan Baoyi, a spokesman for the hospital, refuted the accusation from the four parents. "What they said has no basis at all," Yuan told *Beijing Today* on Tuesday. "Tianjin Heping District Medical Association hasn't given the result of their medical authentication. We won't receive your interview until the result comes out."

However, Tianjin Heping District Medical Association told *Beijing Today* on Wednesday that they haven't started to conduct the medical authentication yet. "Because we haven't established a medical authentication department," a staff member from the administration office of the medical association explained simply.

"Everyone knows the hospital has good relations with the medical association," said Liu.

Up to now, Tianjin Heping District People's Court still hasn't opened a hearing into the case. "More than one

year has passed since we brought lawsuits against the hospital. We don't know when the hearing will open. The only excuse of the court is that the medical authentication hasn't come out yet."

Angry father complains

When asked whether any other families who had gone to the hospital had babies suffering from ROP, spokesman Yuan Baoyi replied firmly. "Never," he said. However, Liu and his wife Sun Huiying witnessed an angry father blaming the doctors for the blindness of his son when they were fulfilling the procedures for their baby to leave the hospital.

"We didn't pay any attention to him, because we hadn't realized the illness of our kid at that time," said Liu. "I haven't seen the father since then."

Liu believes the hospital wouldn't even have reminded him to take his baby for an eye check if the angry father hadn't appeared. "They felt scared when the father blamed them, so they reminded me," said Liu.

However, Zhang Lili and her husband Yue Jun didn't receive the reminder. Their premature baby left the hospital several months before Liu's son. Their baby, who was born in February 2002, received one month of oxygen therapy in the Tianjin Central Gynaecology and Obstetrics Hospital.

"I realized the blindness of my son one month after he was released from the hospital. I found that his eyeballs couldn't follow the movement of objects in front of him. I took him back to the hospital. But they told me that there was nothing wrong with his eyes," Zhang, the 28-year-old mother, told *Beijing Today* on Wednesday in a phone interview.

Zhang's son had also missed the opportunity to take surgery after being diagnosed with ROP in Beijing People's Hospital in June 2002.

Is the long oxygen therapy necessary?

"Excessive oxygen infusion can hurt the eyes and lungs of premature babies," Li Xiaoxin, an ophthalmic expert from the People's Hospital, told CCTV in October 2003. "It's very possible for premature babies to suffer ROP after long continuous oxygen therapy."

Li said excessive oxygen can cause abnormal blood vessels to grow from tissue that should be developing normal blood vessels in the retina, the membrane that lines the back of the eye. The abnormal vessels are weak and can cause scarring of the retina, pulling it out of position. Retinal detachment can lead to poor vision or blindness. Typically, ROP develops in both eyes.

Did the babies need oxygen all the time? According to the medical record of Liu's son, the oxygen saturation in his blood had passed 95 percent, a dangerous level.

"My son's oxygen saturation had reached nearly 98 percent. They should have stopped the oxygen therapy, but they didn't," said Liu. "Just for money!"

According to Liu, oxygen therapy costs 2.5 yuan per hour. His son received 1,040 hours' oxygen therapy. He paid 2,600 yuan in total.

Strong faith in the case

Liu started trying to contact other parents of babies suffering from ROP last year. "We support each other and exchange information on the phone," said Liu. "We firmly believe that we'll win our cases against the hospital."

Liu said he had heard of more than 60 premature babies around the country who had become blind because of oxygen poisoning. The places include not only Tianjin, but also Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Henan, Shandong, Hubei and Guangdong, Anhui, Heilongjiang provinces.

In the past two years, parents of three blind premature babies in Jiangsu and Henan provinces have won their cases against hospitals, which has given hope to Liu and other parents.

Liu told *Beijing Today* that he would make further efforts to draw people's attention to the risk of oxygen poisoning of premature babies. "The leaders of my work unit support me a lot. They give me plenty of time for this," said Liu.

Jiao says he intends to keep on working at least until 2008 when Beijing holds the Olympic Games. But who will take over Jiao's job after that? Nobody. It'll be the end of Jiao's era.

Tunnel Vision

By Shan Jinliang/Dong Wei

Jiao Zhibin may not be that well paid, but he wouldn't change his job for the world. As a boy, he helped repel Japanese invaders using a network of tunnels the local militia built in Shunyi District, Beijing, during World War II. Now, he works as a tour guide in the museum commemorating the resistance and the role played by the tunnels.

Hoping to inspire civilian resistance to the Japanese, the Communist Party helped build a network of underground tunnels connecting four villages in Shunyi District in the outskirts of Beijing, one of which was Jiaozhuanghu Village where Jiao was born in 1933.

Jiao, now 71, is one of few remaining veterans who saw action in the tunnels in the 1940s. As a tour guide for the Beijing Jiaozhuanghu Tunnel Warfare Memorial Hall, he tells tourists how he was inducted in to the Children's Guard at the age of 11. The children were proud bearers of "hong ying qiang", a kind of spear with a red tassel tied to them. Jiao even put his to use, stabbing a Japanese soldier who was trying to get into the tunnels. The tunnels were later used against the Kuomintang during the civil war. From 1943 to 1948, the tunnels were used in about 150 different battles.

Construction of a memorial for the tunnels began in 1963, and Jiao was initially asked to help install the electrics. He enjoyed working there so much he's stayed ever since. "If you think you are happy, you are happy," Jiao told Beijing Television Station last August. Though he only earns between 400 and 600 yuan a month, he is happy with his current employment. His routine of getting up at 6:30 am and going to work at 8 am remained unchanged during the recent chilly Spring Festival holiday.

Little soldier

Work on the tunnel at Jiaozhuanghu began in 1943. Jiao wasn't old enough to help build the tunnel, but he became a member of the Children's Guard.

"Outsiders were not allowed to enter the village freely at that time," he said, "and we would



Pointing out one of the tunnel's shooting turrets

check the strangers and ask for passage permit. No permit, no entry. We children were not easily cheated. We could easily spot traitors who served the Japanese because their hands were not harsh from labor work. Sometimes they would lie and say they were members of the Eighth Route Army under the Communist Party, so I would ask which corps they were from, who their colonel was and what was their purpose here. If they could not respond correctly after a few minutes of cross-examination, we cried out to the village and civilians would come and chase them off."

Jiao sometimes hid himself in a firewood basket to keep an eye out for enemy activity. He was often asked to take letters to the civilian troops outside the village. He recalls one occasion that was particularly important.

"It was in the autumn of 1944 and the village got a message from the upper Party organization that Japanese troops would launch an offensive against our village," he said. "Everyone in the village looked nervous. We started making preparations, and cadres were discussing whether to withdraw or defend the village. The village chief Ma Fu gave me a letter and asked me to take it to the leader of a group of troops at Yindong Village, 1.5 kilometers away from Jiaozhuanghu Village.

"I put the letter into my socks and set out for Yindong

Village carrying a reaphook as a weapon. The sun had begun to set when I found the troops and handed over the letter. The leader decided to set up an ambush for the Japanese near Jiaozhuanghu Village. I knew fighting was about to break out so I hid myself in the nearby Waituo Hill. It was a dark night with heavy rain, and I waited a long time before I thought it was safe to go home. Later I was told that the Japanese invaders learned of the arrival of the troops and withdrew," he told *Beijing Today*.

Making a movie

After liberation, Jiao joined the local children's opera troupe for five years. He became the soloist in many operas and can still sing some sections of them.

At the same time, he also began his school education and graduated from Beijing Liangxiang Electronics Technical School in 1956 with a diploma in electronics. From 1956 to 1962 he worked in construction of power plants in Xi'an, Dalian and Shenyang. In late 1963, the Jiaozhuanghu Tunnel Warfare Memorial Hall started and Jiao was asked to oversee the installation of electricity.

The hall centered around a 750-meter-long section of tunnel and offered an exhibition, a projection hall and a restaurant with a "battle food" theme. The Memorial Hall was completed and opened to visitors free of charge in late 1964. It became popular and was the natural setting for the filming a year later of the famous movie *Tunnel War*. Jiao was put in



Winding through the tunnel network



Cooking at home for the Spring Festival

Photo by Wei Tong

charge of the lighting.

Extra work

The Memorial Hall began to charge visitors in 1987 and Jiao started working as a tour guide, telling visitors about his personal involvement in the tunnel war. The other young tour guides liked to listen to his introduction and called him Jiao laoshi (teacher Jiao). As the only guide who had experienced the tunnel war, Jiao was often asked to show around top central and local officials like Chi Haotian. After the Memorial Hall was certified as a Base for Patriotic Education by the

Chinese central government and Beijing Municipality, Jiao also found himself giving speeches to students.

With permission from the hall, he occasionally made other speeches to make some extra money for himself and his wife Hu Rongsu. Hu, also 71, is suffering from bone hyperplasia. The old couple got a donation of 10,000 yuan from a charity program run by Beijing Television Station in September 2002 to help with Hu's treatment. However, the money ran out a year later so Jiao had to think of other ways to make some money.

Jiao has two sons and two daughters, but he hates asking them for help as they don't have that much money themselves. Hu still supports her husband's hard work as it does at least maintain a regular income.

SARS strike

Last year was difficult, thanks largely to SARS. The Memorial Hall closed for more than two months and Jiao was forced to look for agricultural work.

Jiao told *Beijing Today* his life lost balance overnight as he had nobody to talk to and no chance to visit the tunnel. The stress led to Jiao suffering

high blood pressure, and he soon had to take medicine every day. Returning to work as a tour guide and electrician later in the year was a huge relief and now Jiao says he has largely recovered.

No successor

The 60th anniversary of the successful conclusion of the war against the Japanese is coming up and the hall has collected 385 items of war relics to build a new exhibition hall, 70 percent of which were contributed by Jiao, Memorial Hall Director Ma Zeng told *Beijing Today*.

Ma said the hall is setting up some new sections based on Jiao's experience. The hall also intends to expand its remit to some other local relics, like the former command office of the No. 14 Military Area and the Song Shilun-Deng Hua Division Troops. Director Ma says he plans to restore the old buildings and open them to visitors. Jiao will be the main tour guide for these relics.

Jiao is in good health now and says he intends to keep on working at least until 2008 when Beijing holds the Olympic Games. But who will take over Jiao's job after that? Nobody, said Ma. It'll be the end of Jiao's era.

Confucius No Longer Says ...

China's last Confucius-style private school closes

Sishu, private schools based on Confucian ideals and methods of teaching, were once the main source of education in China. With the closing of the last existing sishu school in Hunan Province on December 31, this ancient tradition has finally ended.

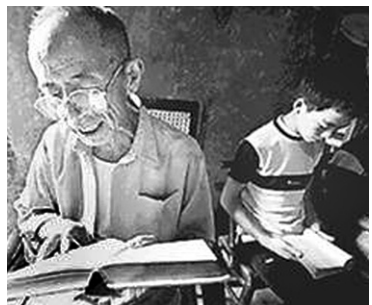
By Zhang Huan

Confucius established the first sishu class over 2,500 years ago. What distinguishes sishu schools from modern ones is the teaching method and content of the lessons. In a sishu school, students study the Confucian classics, ancient poetry and calligraphy, and learn the traditional etiquette and rites for weddings and funerals. Each student is allowed to choose different areas to study and the tutor teaches students one on one. The teaching method involves mainly reading and recitation. Physical punishment by the teacher is also allowed.

In remote and rural areas where modern educational ideas have had less influence than in the cities, sishu schools were once very popular. But in recent years, with fewer and fewer qualified tutors, the tradition has withered. By the end of last year, the Five Peaks Sishu School in Pingjiang County, Hunan, the only remaining one in China, closed its doors.

The last sishu tutor

Zhu Zhizhong, 83 years old, was the school's founder and tutor. The school was actually an old village house consisting of



Zhu leads one of his last groups of students in reading the Confucian classics.

three rooms. The two rooms in the front were where Zhu and his family lived and the room in the back served as the classroom.

Some old door planks made up the desks, on which were traditional writing brushes, ink sticks, paper and ink stones, rather than the pencil boxes found in modern schools. On the walls were poems and articles written by the students. Zhu's school did not charge high fees: 30 yuan a month plus 1 jin, or 0.5 kilogram of rice. Even the rice was later remitted. Rich families usually paid more while some poor families received discounts.

Zhu started teaching the Confucian classics when he was 19. In his childhood, he studied in a local sishu school for several years and was then acknowledged as a scholar in his hometown. He set up his school at home in his thirties, following the traditional teaching method and content. After the founding of New China, the school was closed down on two occasions, reopening again at the end of the 1960s.

Zhu's son and grandson both graduated from college and worked in the city. He told local media that he kept the school going so long as he did not do it for the money, but out of interest. "My sishu school has lasted for over 50 years, off and on. I did, not accept many students at one time: the most was over 10 in a year and the least, four or five a year. I have altogether taught hundreds of students over the years."

Promoting traditional culture

According to Zhu, the primary subject taught at a sishu school is Confucian classics. When beginning a new lesson, Zhu would first explain the article to each student once or twice and then ask the students to read it over and over again.

The following day, the students would be required to stand and recite the article. Calligraphy was also an important subject. Students were asked to bring paper from home and copy calligraphy models under Zhu's supervision.

Besides reading Confucian classics and practicing calligraphy, students also learned to write letters, invitations and memorial articles



Photo by Cai Daizheng

Exhibition Illuminates Ancient Dian Culture

By Zhao Pu

Ancient relics from the Dian Kingdom in Yunnan province in southwest China are on show at the China National Museum in Beijing. The exhibition includes 179 items, including articles of daily use, weapons, religious relics and artwork from the ancient kingdom, which was founded nearly 2,000 years ago.

The culture of the Dian Kingdom can be traced back to the

Warring States Period (475-221 BC). It thrived in the east and central area of Yunnan for about 500 years, up until the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220).

Excavation of the site began in the 1950s. In the past 50 years, thousands of relics have been unearthed. The exhibition, titled Light of Civilization - Exhibition of the Dian Kingdom Relics, marks the first time for these precious articles to be shown to the public.

"The discovery of the Dian

Kingdom is of great significance for the study of ancient Chinese civilization. It is as splendid as that of the ancient Shu Kingdom in Sichuan Province and the tomb of Emperor Qin Shihuang in Xi'an," says deputy curator of the China National Museum, Dong Qi.

The exhibition is comprised of five sections: aspects of life, economy, weapons, religion and art. Clothing and jewelry in the life section highlight the differences between the people of the

Dian Kingdom, and the Han Chinese during the same period. Architectural styles and customs are also introduced in this section.

The economy section features a number of bronze farming tools and bronze containers decorated with motifs depicting farming and hunting, showing that agriculture was a central aspect of the economy in the Dian Kingdom.

The exhibition will run until March 25.

Questionable value

Despite the decline of sishu schools, there has been a trend in recent years in many cities to revive some aspects of traditional culture. Some modern schools give classes in literary classics for children below the age of 13, as a way of improving their cultural understanding and knowledge of Chinese culture. The use of traditional teaching methods and content in modern education has become a focus of discussion.

Guo Qijia, a professor of education at Beijing Normal University says, "In traditional Chinese culture, Buddhism was propagated through the Buddhist temples

and Taoism was spread through Taoist temples. Confucianism, however, was spread by way of sishu schools and academies of classical learning from generation to generation. In this sense, I feel sorry about the closure of the Five-Peaks Sishu School."

Zhong Tianhui, a peasant from Hongjia, in Hunan Province, explained the reason he sent his son to Zhu's school, "Studying in modern schools can help in making achievements while studying in the old-style school can teach a person how to behave. For a peasant, it is more important to learn how to behave."

However, Shu Yi, an educa-

tionalist and the curator of the Modern Literature Museum of China expressed different ideas. "It is not worthy to feel sadness at the closing of the last sishu school, or to protect (the tradition). The fact that it has disappeared proves that it should disappear. The education at a sishu school is very backward. Neither the teaching methods nor the teaching content can meet the development needs of the modern society. It does not cover maths, foreign language, computers or even physical education, which prevents the students from being able to be integrated into the modern education system."

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Prudence or Prudishness?

CCTV forces folk performers off stage for risqué jokes

By Yu Shanshan

Provincial-style performance forms that try to make it on urban stages generally face the same dilemma. Should they change to suit more sophisticated audiences at the cost of their original, more earthy sensibility or keep the pristine humor of their region?

That issue has come to the fore since Spring Festival thanks to the protests of star actor Zhao Benshan. Zhao, a native of Liaoning Province and a favorite fixture on CCTV's New Year extravaganza shows, has been fighting a decision made by that channel last month to essential censor a performance of *er ren zhuan*, a humorous song-and-dance duet popular in the northeast provinces of Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang.

Art, interrupted

On January 4, CCTV Channel 3 broadcast a live contest of mini-dramas representing performance styles particular to different parts of the country. The *er ren zhuan* act was meant to cover China's Northeast.

However, when actor Zhang Xiaofei took off his shirt and exposed his back to the audience as part of the act, the performance was interrupted by host Zhou Dejiang, who told Zhang to put his clothes back on under the guise of a joke that it was "too cold." Minutes later the show was forced to end and the actors left the stage when Zhang's partner, He Meiling, whimsically fanned air into his pants.

The incident angered Zhao Benshan, a master *er ren zhuan* actor who has gone on to great fame thanks to sketches and TV serials on CCTV. When he took the stage after his former students, Zhao abandoned the script and broke into an impromptu protest against the station's prudish move and lack of respect for the art form. He said, "I know it's CCTV, but you should at least let them finish their performance!"

Zhao's outspoken improvisation in turn upset the directors of CCTV, the main national network, which has a reputation for trying to maintain

strict discipline and timetables during all live programs. "Everything went fine in the rehearsals. We had no idea the actors would add some improvised material that was not decent. Plus, they went over their allotted time, so I told the presenter to stop them," Wang Xiao, director of the live contest, explained to *Beijing Star Daily* on January 6.

Love it or hate it

Born over 300 years ago in rural Northeast China, *er ren zhuan* makes comic use of the area's distinct accent. Performances consist of two actors, one man, one woman, singing and dancing and telling jokes. Topics are taken from events in normal life, such as quarrels between

husbands and wives. Zhao Benshan has long been the champion of the form, and his appearances in CCTV programs have fueled the spreading recognition of *er ren zhuan* in Beijing, Shanghai and other cities nationwide.

In general, feelings towards this regional performance form seem to divide audiences into two clear groups – lovers and haters.

Those that love the art most enjoy its connection to events in normal life and the earthiness of its humor, according to a survey of urban *er ren zhuan* fans conducted by the *Liaoshen Evening News*, a Shenyang-based newspaper, last fall.

The sexual innuendo common in jokes in *er ren zhuan* are one of the main dividing lines in opinion about the art form. Such humor was certainly a factor in CCTV's decision to pull the plug during the now infamous January 4 performance, a decision supported by many around the country. One respondent to a discussion forum about the incident on Sina.com wrote that such acts should never appear on CCTV, while another condemned the whole art form as vulgar, adding, "It should stay in the Northeast countryside and has no place here in Beijing!"

Among less scrupulous audiences, such "vulgarity" is a major reason behind *er ren zhuan*'s popularity. According to a report in *People's Daily* on January 15, some entertainment venues, such as the FF Night Bar at Shenyang, host *er ren zhuan* acts full of profanity or even run strip shows under the guise of *er ren zhuan* performances.

In that same article, Li Jing, a primary school teacher in Shenyang, argued that some sexual content is certainly acceptable and can be very funny. "Any adult can judge what's pornographic and what's simply light sexual joking – I don't understand why CCTV has made such a big deal out of a few harmless laughs?" she quipped.

Time for change?

"Historically, many traditional Chinese folk arts, like *xiangsheng*, contained some sexual



Star Northeastern actor Zhao Benshan is a champion of the *er ren zhuan* performance style and criticized CCTV's decision during the same show.
Photo by Ji Xiang

material early on. That allowed them to attract audiences from the lower classes, where they came from and where they developed," said Bai Gengsheng, vice director of the Chinese Folk Literature and Art Society. "In today's world, which is overwhelmed by mass media, folk arts have to seek the stage on TV, meaning some adjustments have to be made to make sure performances better match the aesthetics of refined urban people."

The need for honing some of *er ren zhuan*'s rougher edges is not lost on Zhao Benshan, whose widely reported dream is to promote *er ren zhuan* in China and around the world.

Zhao has had success with toned-down *er ren zhuan* performances in regions outside of the Northeast, such as shows done by the Liaoning Folk Troupe at the Shanghai Jinmao Tower last October. A critic from the *Shanghai Star* noted about the show, "It can be difficult for southern Chinese to understand such performances because they use dialect. But the melodies and dances are sweet and cheerful, the actors wear beautiful costumes and sing in clear and bright voices."

Nearly a week after the controversial CCTV program, another

er ren zhuan show was put on in Beijing's Ethnic Cultural Palace (Minzugong) Theater, in part intended as proof that the art form has far more to offer than lewd jokes.

However, some fans of folk art forms worry that reforming or cleaning up of these performance style may effectively purge them of their original humor and soul. Xie Xizhang, a famous art critic for the *Beijing Evening News* pointed out in a commentary written on January 15 for Sina.com that creating situations in which the arts of the lower classes can live and develop is more important than raising the aesthetic levels of such art forms.

Xie also pointed out the absurdity of demanding the diverse cultures of China's huge nation to all match one standard. "In China, television stations represent the standards of the government, but not the masses – that is the true root of the conflict between Zhao and CCTV. Therefore, when speaking of the living crisis of our folk arts, I find the real crisis is not the shrinkage of the market for folk art but folk art having to lose some of its most dynamic, vigorous elements," he wrote.

"Offending" actors Zhang Xiaofei and He Meiling in an *er ren zhuan* performance on a Shenyang stage last April.

Photo by Zhang Wenkui

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加裕华装饰

By Dong Nan

Those still mourning the failure of the Rolling Stones to materialize in Beijing might have a consolation prize, of sorts. Legendary '70s heavy metal act Deep Purple are not only still living and breathing, they're coming to town!

The band has recently reformed, or re-reformed, released a brand spanking new album, and are currently touring to promote it. Reformed, that is, with Ian Gillan, Roger Glover and Ian Paice on vocals, bass and guitar respectively, but minus original guitarist Ritchie Blackmore and keyboard player Jon Lord, which, to some pedants out there, might raise questions as to whether it really is Deep Purple after all ...

"Though Led Zeppelin are more well-know in China and I love them better indeed, I want to see Deep Purple as well, I have their 1972 album, which I believe is their best one, and some others," college student Ding An told *Beijing Today*.

On the American and European legs of this tour, as

Smoke on Houhai



Deep Purple 30 years on - from left Steve, Morse, Ian Paice, Don Airey, Roger Glover and Ian Gillam (seated)

well as playing selections from their latest album *Bananas*, the band are playing the 1972 album *Machine Head* in its entirety.

That would be the one with tracks including *Highway Star*, *Space Truckin'*, and, yes, *Smoke on the Water*. If once is not enough,

after their gig at Worker's Gymnasium on March 31, Deep Purple will also play Nanjing, Shanghai and Guangzhou.

An Olfactory Comedy

By Wang Xiaoxiao

The last of this year's Spring Festival movies from Hong Kong started screening here Saturday, a week earlier than its Hong Kong premiere.

Hua Hao Yue Yuan (*Elixir of Love*) is directed by Sally Yeh (*Lavender*, *Just One Look*), and features an all-star cast, including Miriam Yeung, Richie Ren, Bee Chung and Zhao Liang.

The movie is a romantic comedy about Princess Hanxiang (Miriam Yeung) and a poor horticulturist, Shen Mengxi (Richie Ren). Princess Hanxiang suffers from a terrible affliction, a severe and apparently incurable case of body odor.

However, being a princess, Hanxiang needs to marry. Her father, the emperor, announces that whoever succeeds in curing the unfortunate princess can marry her, becoming son-in-law of the emperor.

Shen Mengxi appears on the scene, and with his finely tuned appreciation for the scent of flowers,



Richie Ren and Miriam Yeung

tries to develop a perfume that can mask the princess's unfortunate affliction.

Of course, all does not go smoothly. The villain, the imperial doctor (Bee Chung), upsets Shen's plans at every opportunity. And of course, being a light hearted comedy, Princess Hanxiang and the poor horticulturist eventually fall in love.

mer Wang Lan is one of the most talented in China, and though young, has performed with many established stars including Cui Jian, Zhang Chu, Dou Wei and Xu Wei. Many fans consider that Thin Man's live shows are far more exciting than what they have accomplished in the studio to date.

Line up:

Vocal: Dai Qin Guitar: Fu Ning Bass: San'er Drums: Wang Lan

Shouren I (Thin Man I) 1999
Xiwang (Live) (Hope) 2002
Beijing Meng (Beijing Dream) 2002

Cuban Swans in Beijing

By Yu Shanshan

Despite a big media build-up, the National Ballet of Cuba's production of *Swan Lake* received a lukewarm reception from audiences at the Great Hall of the People last month.

Staged in conjunction with the first Beijing International Dance Festival, which ran from December 12 to January 20, it was one of four productions of Tchaikovsky's classic seen here in as many weeks.

The ballet was choreographed by Alicia Alonso, founder of the company and one of the most famous ballerinas of the 20th Century. Unlike in other versions, love triumphs over evil, Siegfried defeats Rothbart and breaks the spell, and the swans turn into beautiful maidens.

There were several evident changes from Alonso's original version, first staged in 1953, most notable of which was the transformation of the Spanish dance in the third act into a pas de deux. More striking were the costumes, which substituted the elegance of traditional tutus and leotards for loud, even garish, colors.

WORLDWIDE

Rapper Ice Cube Shows Funny Side in 'Barbershop 2'

Rapper and movie star Ice Cube is back where he likes to be, in the middle of controversy, in *Barbershop 2*, the sequel to the 2002 hit comedy about a barbershop owner trying to save his business in Chicago.

The original *Barbershop* created a stir when the cantankerous but fatherly barber Eddie, played by Cedric the Entertainer, vulgarly dismissed Jesse Jackson's reputation and made light of civil rights icon Rosa Parks, and the new movie is sure to touch a few nerves as well.

"I like the fact that the movie showed that black people don't all have the same opinion," Ice Cube said in an interview ahead of the sequel's February 6 release. (Reuters)



Ice Cube

Jim Craig wants an upcoming movie to change that.

"It's a wonderful love story about guys who have this dream, a coach who has a vision and a country that needed uplifting," said Craig, the goaltender of the 1980 US Olympic hockey team.

Miracle, which opens Friday, tells the story of 20 fresh-faced college kids who upset the seemingly unstoppable Soviets 4-3 en route to a gold medal at the Olympics in Lake Placid, New York. (Reuters)



The Foo Fighters have been added to the scheduled performers for the Grammy Awards telecast on February 8, 2004.

Grammys Planning Beatles Tribute

Sting, Dave Matthews, Vince Gill and the Neptunes' Pharrell Williams have signed on for a Grammy tribute to the 40th anniversary of the Beatles' first US television appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show*.

They join Prince, Beyonce Knowles and Black Eyed Peas with Justin Timberlake as newly confirmed performers for the Grammys, to be held February 8 in Los Angeles.

In addition, Jackson Browne, Emmylou Harris, Dwight Yoakam, Jorge Calderon and the Eagles' Timothy B. Schmit will offer a musical tribute to the late Warren Zevon, who is up for five Grammys. (Reuters)



Mel Brooks made a pose with show girls

Mel Brooks: Thanks for the Hit, Adolf

Hollywood legend Mel Brooks thanked Adolf Hitler Monday for inspiring his greatest hit and told Jews not to worry - *The Producers* is a joke.

At the ripe old age of 77, Brooks is enjoying a renaissance with his first film transformed into a theater hit and now being made into a movie all over again.

In the original 1968 movie, Brooks immortalized bad taste with the tale of two producers putting on the outrageous musical *Springtime for Hitler*, conceived as a deliberate flop to allow them to take the backers' cash and flee. (Reuters)

'Miracle' Tells Story of 1980 Hockey Team

A generation of Americans doesn't know the exhilarating win dubbed the "Miracle on Ice" or the tale behind sportscaster Al Michaels' breathless call, "Do you believe in miracles? Yes!"

MTV Blames Janet Jackson for Super Bowl Incident

Singer Janet Jackson masterminded the Super Bowl halftime stunt that left her right breast exposed and prompted a federal probe into television indecency, the head of MTV said Tuesday.

"Janet Jackson engineered it," MTV Chief Executive Tom Freston told Reuters in an interview.

The blame on Jackson comes on a second day of fallout after pop idol Justin Timberlake tore off half of Jackson's black leather bustier while the pair were singing a duet, exposing her right breast at the conclusion of Sunday's Super Bowl halftime show. (Reuters)



Janet Jackson

Rock Review

Thin Man

By Dong Nan

Shouren (Thin Man) are a well known band on the Beijing rock scene. Their 1999 debut, *Shouren I*, won them instant recognition and fame, selling 100,000 copies in six months.

It is difficult to pin the band to a particular category. Some of their songs are reminiscent of Cui Jian's style, some sound totally original. Generally, their sound might be described as a



Vocal: Dai Qin

combination of hard rock and funk rhythms with Chinese characteristics.

Lead vocalist Dai Qin is a rock veteran in Beijing rock scene. A tireless performer, he frequently improvises. Drum-

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By Lisa Lee

Buying new scissors around Spring Festival is an old custom in Beijing, in part because shears are said to cut out bad elements of the past and bring good fortune. And when traditional Beijingers are ready for a new pair of scissors, they are most likely to head to Wang Mazi, a brand famed for centuries in the capital.

"Our brand is so famous that many people use Wang Mazi as a catch-all for all scissors from northern China," bragged Ma Yanzhi, manager of the Wang Mazi Scissors Store near the Drum Tower on Di'anmenwai Dajie. The brand has earned its enviable reputation by producing scissors with long sharp blades that keep their edge and are very durable.

Yet Wang Mazi's recent history has been marred by financial troubles caused by increasing competition and mismanagement, leading the company to apply for bankruptcy in the middle of last year. "However, since the government has patented the brand, the Wang Mazi name will not vanish," said Ma. The Spring Festival season just past proved lucrative to the struggling scissor makers, as locals and expats came to the store to buy gifts or items for their own use. Ma's shop stacks over 300 varieties of top-quality scissors, including ones meant for use in the garden, at the office, for hair, for clothes and heavier-duty models. Among the best sellers are impressive pairs gilded with gold or silver dragon and phoenix designs that fetch just 28 yuan each.

The story of Wang Mazi goes all the way back to 1651, the eighth year of the reign of the Qing emperor Shunzi. That year, a pock-marked faced man surnamed Wang (his complexion is the source of the store's name), opened a store selling flint steel and scissors in the Caishikou area near Xuanwumen. He quickly earned a reputation for remarkable attention to quality and the durability of his goods and the Wang Mazi label emerged as a local brand celebrated literally for centuries.

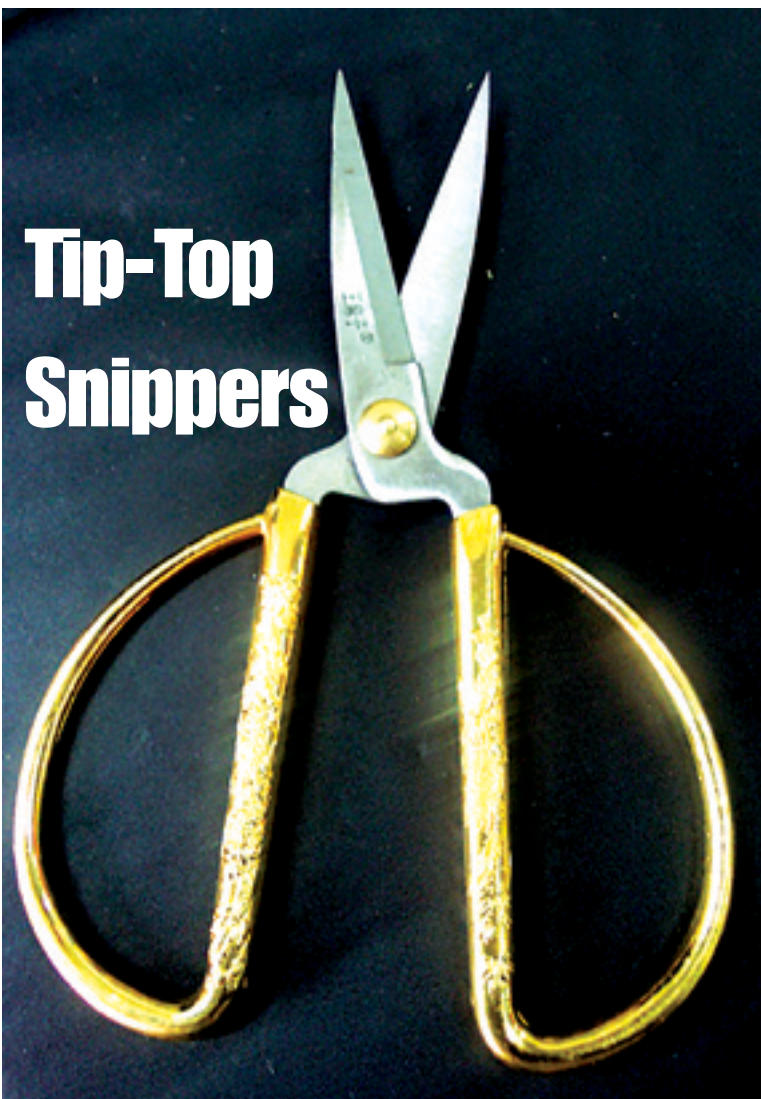
Where: No. 124, Di'anmenwai Dajie, Xicheng **Open:** 8:30 am - 6 pm **Tel:** 6404 2394



Wang Mazi scissors range in size and price, from 6 to 50 yuan.

Photos by Geng Lei / Lisa Lee

Tip-Top Snippers



Violin, 780 yuan

Grabbing Garb

By Chen Si

The clothes on sale at the Xiangbo Shop near Shuang'an Plaza are no normal garments. According to owner Wang Wenjian, who personally designs all the fashions on sale, the whole point of the shop is to allow customers to show their individuality, so most of the items are striking one-offs.

A representative example is the "sun jacket" (720 yuan), which carries a motif of nine suns taken from Chinese lore. The suns, made of different materials and color, are sewn onto a base of deep black to create a bold and lively jacket. Similar designs also highlight a pair of pants, priced at 420 yuan.

A dust coat, tagged at 720 yuan, stands out with its unusual lines and shapes. It features a vertical collar, tight waist and loose bottom, which balloons out like a skirt. The sleeves are narrow but the cuffs open. The coat is made of flax and has a Western feel, while its buttons are distinctly Chinese. It is shaped to show the beauty of the female form.

One of Wang's more fanciful creations is an item called "violin" (780 yuan). It is a bit longer than an ordinary coat and made from red silk. There are several holes cut in the garment, with strings tied through the holes. The back of the underside of the garment is covered in fur, giving it a wild flavor sure to draw the attention of the bold and fashion-conscious.

Where: No. FB2, west of Shuang'an Plaza, Haidian **Open:** 10 am-10 pm **Tel:** 13051260815



Sun Jacket, 720 yuan

Potty for Pottery

By Zhang Ran

Yu Gong You Pottery is one in a wave of local arts stores that offer customers truly hands-on experiences. In this case, people can choose to purchase one of the ceramic pieces that fill the sparsely decorated room, or get their hands dirty and make something of their own.

Store owner Liu Sheng-li is a member of the China Ceramic Association and founded Yu Gong You pottery in 1996. Initially he intended the space to serve simply as a forum for pottery lovers to hone their talents, but has been pleasantly surprised to watch the store develop into a prosperous business.

Upon entering the shop, visitors are met by a display of many ceramic plates of myriad design hanging on the wall. Each is 20 centimeters in diameter and priced between 200 and 500 yuan. More dramatic are the tall, plump vases painted gold that



stand in the middle of the space.

Arguably the most attractive pieces available are ceramic figures of people, full of life with entrancing expressions on their faces. Subjects include a baby in swaddling, a grandmother from northern China, a comedian holding a paper fan, a girl with fun braided hair and a crooked rural man in untidy dress.

Other works on sale, or for reproduction include ceramic lamps, as well as pieces that represent different cultures, from the Maya to the northern Chinese.

Where: Building 35, Zaoyingbeili, Maizidian, Chaoyang **Open:** 24 hours **Tel:** 6591 3400

Dong Minority girl, 600 yuan
Head, 800 yuan
Jar, 350 yuan



Photo by Sun Haitao

No Fear Gear

By Wang Xiaoxiao

The Wangfujing Church (also known as the Eastern Church) has a special place in the hearts of some local teenagers, as its concrete plaza is a perfect place for kicking around on a skateboard or pulling tricks in in-line skates. The nearby store Shan Lan Hao enjoys a prime location for cashing in on the skaters that flock to the church and offers and wide range of skateboards, hardware and skate wear.

Among the store's top sellers are skating shoes, representing many major international brands such as DC, Vans, Airwalk and Es. Owner Wang Hao has recently added some new styles from other makers sure to drive the kids wild. "There are some other skate stores in Beijing, but no one has everything we do. All of our shoes are real and from American brands," shop assistant Wang Yu boasted to *Beijing Today*. However, because the skids are made in China, their prices are surprisingly reasonable, most going for 300 to 400 yuan per pair.

Skaters can personalize their new shoes with a selection of brightly colored laces that sell for just 10 yuan a set. There's no better way to draw attention to your board heroics than with a pair of day-glo yellow laces.

Apart from assorted skating equipment and gear, Wang offers a range of funky hats, bags and wallets sporting distinct skater style. The selection is rounded out by his unlikely collection of wind-up toy robots from Japan. Prices are rather steep, at 400 yuan to 500 yuan per toy, perhaps representing their place in Wang's heart as much as their rarity.

Where: No.2 Jixiang Gongyi, Wangfujing, Dongcheng

Another shop at No. 57 Longfusi Beidajie, Dongcheng **Open:** 10 am - 10 pm **Tel:** 13691293918

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By Joel Kirkhart

My first taste of Vietnamese food came in the form of a steaming bowl of *pho*, rice noodles in beef broth, when I was 16. I was immediately hooked and have been addicted to Vietnamese food ever since. So it was with great excitement that I headed with my girlfriend to Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City (otherwise known as Saigon or HCMC) over Spring Festival vacation. Sure, there were the sights, the sounds and the people, but we were most interested in the tastes of Vietnam.

During our 10 days in the country, we ate incredibly well, generally at very reasonable prices, and in the end found that we were still just scratching at the surface of this varied and intricate cuisine.

It was a fun time to be in the country (despite some concern over chicken flu), as it was the season of Tet, Vietnamese New Year, which is celebrated at the same time as China's Spring Festival. Hanoi's streets were filled with people, most riding scooters, and nearly every home and business held a blossoming peach or kumquat tree, symbols of good luck and prosperity. Nearly as ubiquitous were savory square rice cakes called *banh chung* that are musts for Tet. *Banh chung* consist of sticky rice mixed with minced meat and vegetables such as bean sprouts or carrot, then wrapped in a large green leaf, ready to be slow cooked as a whole for 24 hours. We had no way to cook them so were not able to try the cakes, but heard they are rich with an acquired strong taste.

In our culinary ventures, we were delighted to find that there is no need to spend a lot to get great food in Vietnam. In fact, some of the country's more simple foods are among its most delicious. Arguably the king of such delicacies is *pho*, my favorite soup of rice noodles in beef broth. Now found throughout the country, *pho* is native to Hanoi, and nearly every street in the capital is home to at least one small, dingy stand serving up steaming bowls of the soup for a song.

Tucking into a bowl of *pho* is a multi-step process. First, a helping of fresh rice noodles is put into a bowl and topped with simmering broth made from beef bones and spices including ginger, cinnamon and star anise.



Pho, rice noodles in beef broth, is a staple in Vietnam, commonly eaten for breakfast



Fried spring rolls, *cha gio*, are crisp yet not oily, filled with meat, vegetables and shrimp.

Tastes of Vietnam



Vendors roam the streets of Hanoi, selling fresh vegetables, fruit and even crisp baguettes.

Paper-thin slices of lean beef are laid atop the soup and actually cook in the hot broth. The bowl is finished with a handful of chopped fresh spring onions and cilantro. A good bowl of *pho* should be pretty clear with a complex, irresistible aroma. Diners can add fresh bean sprouts, sprigs of fresh



Good pho comes with a communal side plate of fresh herbs and condiments.

herbs, lime juice and chili sauce to their liking before tucking in.



Slices of *banh xeo* pancakes should be wrapped in herbs and lettuce and dunked in sauce.

We got our first *pho* at a tiny street-side stand near Hoan Kiem Lake in central Hanoi. It was late, we were desperate and the *pho* was a little lacking, but still satisfying and dirt cheap at just \$.30 a bowl. The *pho* in Hanoi proved clearer and simpler than that we had in

Saigon, which was more to my liking with a richer broth and more trimmings, mostly more herbs and a hoisin-like sauce best avoided because it flattens the subtle flavorings of the broth. The

Spring rolls, whether fried or fresh, meaning wrapped in an uncooked rice wrapper, are favorites of Vietnamese and foreigners alike. At the upscale restaurant Nam Phuong in Hanoi, we tried some

relatively fancy rolls that contained sizeable, juicy shrimp, but were just as impressed with the humbler vegetarian versions we had at a mid-range restaurant called Hanoi Garden that were big and chewy, filled with



Fresh spring rolls are tucked into uncooked rice wrappers with shrimp, pork or vegetarian fillings.

rice vermicelli, herbs and slabs of sauteed tofu.

Another quick delicacy that is best wrapped in herbs or leaf of fresh lettuce is *banh xeo*, a thin pancake made of rice flour fried at high heat until crisp and filled with pork, bean sprouts, spring onion, small shrimp and pieces of mushroom. Diners cut or tear off a piece of the pancake,

wrap it inside a leaf of lettuce along with some fresh herbs and then dip the whole packet into an amazing sauce that is spicy, sweet, rich and refreshing all at the same time.

That dipping sauce, called *nuoc mam cham*, is one of the best things about eating *banh xeo*, spring rolls and many other foods. It is one of the innumerable items in Vietnamese cuisine that makes use of fish sauce, or *nuoc mam*, a brown brew that some cannot stand, while others, myself included, find absolutely addictive. Just don't ask how it's made.

In Hanoi, perhaps the prime place to check out these kinds of street-style delicacies is the massive Ben Thanh Market near the center of town. Stalls inside sell all kinds of cooked-on-the-spot treats, from humble bowls of *pho* and noodles with meat and vegetables to massive grilled prawns and rich iced coffee. We sat down for a sampler plate of skewers of grilled minced pork, beef wrapped in fragrant leaves, shrimp paste grilled on sugar cane and spring rolls. All were delicious, particularly when



A sampler of treats at Ben Thanh market, centered around the fantastic, ubiquitous sauce *nuoc mam cham*

wrapped with leaves of sharp, fresh mint and peppery basil and dipped in some fabulous *nuoc mam cham*. We emerged from Ben Thanh pleasantly stuffed, my wallet lighter by a mere four dollars - and we were ripped off! What a country.

Recipe:

Nuoc Mam Cham — Vietnamese Fish Sauce Dip

The sugar, water and vinegar in this sauce tone down the natural pungency of *nuoc mam*, or fish sauce, and is perfect for dipping all kinds of things or for pouring over rice or noodles as a healthy and delicious topping.

Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup (60 ml) water
- 1 teaspoon rice vinegar
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 red chili, seeded and finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- 2 tablespoons fish sauce

Procedure:

Boil water with vinegar and sugar until dissolved, then cool. Add remaining ingredients, stir.

Kitchen Confessionals



Han Jian

Chef Han Hones Henan Cooking

By Shan Jinliang

Henan cuisine may not be among China's eight major schools of cooking, but that hardly proved an impediment to Han Jian, head chef at Beijing Henan Plaza, when he took home the group championship for China at the Fourth International Chinese Cooking Contest in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 2002.

He won the top prize for his unique creations based on traditional Henan dishes made more sophisticated with elements from Cantonese, Huaiyang and even western cuisine. It was an encouraging moment in his life-long quest to improve Henan cuisine and make it better known.

Han, 30, was born in Changge, Henan, to a family with serious cooking legacy, as his great-grandfather was a decorated chef for the Empress Dowager Cixi of the late Qing Dynasty. The latest master chef in the Han family began his career in 1990 as a cook in the Yucai Hotel in Henan's capital Zhengzhou under the eye of his uncle, the renowned chef Han Zongtian.

During his first year on the job, Han concentrated most of his 12-hour days on honing his chopping skills and speed. At one point, after Han sliced a sizeable chunk off one of his fingers, his uncle demanded he give up the cook's life, but he refused. In retrospect, he says, his uncle's strict ways gave him a solid foundation for the rest of his career.

In 1993, Han was sent to Guangzhou to learn Cantonese cuisine for half a year, which gave him exposure to many other regional styles of Chinese cooking. His dishes took on a unique style with bright sauces, sharp flavors and winning textures, paving the way to his cooking for such prominent Chinese political leaders as now Premier Wen Jiabao.

While a cook at the Yuanwang Hotel in Zhengzhou in 1995, Han was chosen from 80 candidates to be one of the eight new chefs at Beijing Henan Plaza. Starting as a simple line chef, he studied and worked hard and earned promotion to head chef in 2000.

Han's home contains hundreds of books about cooking and he scours bookstores for new material every week. He strives to improve his work, and to give new twists to Henan dishes, by learning from other master chefs. That hard work has paid off in the form of many domestic prizes, including victories in the 1999 National Cooking Skills Contest and a China Central Television cooking contest in 2001.

Though he is pushing to update and improve many Henan standards, he manages to do so using relatively less expensive materials, allowing him to cut the prices of some dishes by more than half while actually enhancing flavor. Han also gives careful consideration to nutrition, such as by adding materials to the Henan staple *huimian*, or mixed noodles, to make them healthier.

Han says it is vitally important for Henan cuisine to receive international recognition in order to push its further development. He believes that Chinese cuisine in general should take some lessons from the West, in terms of nutritional balance and careful ingredient selection, in order to raise its global profile and truly take its place among the great cuisines of the world.



Central Saigon comes to life on Friday nights, as people head out on their scooters to dine at restaurants and cruise the streets. Photos by Joel Kirkhart

Stage

**Drama: Tianshang Renjian (From Heaven to Earth)**

The story spans ancient and modern times, fairy story and real life.

Where: Tianqiao Theater, 30 Beiwei Lu, Xuanwu District **When:** February 13, 14 7:30 pm **Admission:** 50-280 yuan **Tel:** 8315 6300

Drama: Malan Hua (Malan Flower)

Long ago, there was a saying that whoever found a malan flower would be the most fortunate person (or animal) in the forest.

Where: Poly Theater, 1/F Poly Plaza, 14 Dongzhimen Nandajie **When:** February 4-6, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 40-280 **Tel:** 6500 1188

Qu Opera: Zhenghongqi Xia (Under the Red Flag)

Adapted from renowned novelist and dramatist Lao She's novel of the same name. It is not only a history of Lao She's family, but also a picture of Beijing people's life and habits at the beginning of the last century.

Where: Ethnic Cultural Palace Theater, 49 Fuxingmennei Dajie, Xicheng District **When:** February 11-14, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 100-280 yuan **Tel:** 6605 2404

Activities

Immortal valley walk

This loop walk offers great valley and ridge views. The high point is 800 meters high, offering a panoramic view. The walk passes through a park with an icy cave and a huge waterfall.

Where: pick up at Lido Hotel outside Starbucks Cafe **When:** February 8, 8:30 **Admission:** 200 yuan **Tel:** 13910025516

Taiji, Calligraphy, Chinese Classical Music

The movement of ears in listening, hands in motion and feet in dancing are all linked through the mind. This class is not just a lecture. Think of music pouring like water, calligraphy flowing like a dragon, and taiji as a powerful wind. If you have tried or are going to try any of these arts, you will appreciate the chance to expand your thinking from "a single art" to the unified, opened up expression of your "qi." Come and join Master Paul Wang and experience these three arts as "one," seeking their common core to expand your knowledge and practice.

Where: Opera Photo Theatre, No. 29, An Jia Lou, Liangmaqiao Road, east of Kempinski, Guangming and 21st Century Hotel **When:** February 7, 2 pm - 4 pm **Admission:** 40 yuan (30 yuan for students) **Tel:** 8851 4913

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By Dong Nan

SURVEY

Gerhard Richter 2004 International Exhibition



Exhibitions

Gerhard Richter 'Survey'

Gerhard Richter's selection can be seen as a retrospective in a nutshell: he has chosen 27 works that give us an insight into all his creative phases. From '60s photo-paintings to the abstracts painted in the '80s and '90s. Work addressing historical events is represented in the exhibition as a reminder of Richter's 1999 contribution, *Black, Red, Gold*, to the interior of the Bundestag in Berlin. But behind all the various motifs, stylistic approaches and art-historical references, Gerhard Richter's great and only subject is painting itself.

Where: Creation Gallery, north end of Ritan Dong Lu **When:** February 14-29, daily 10 am - 7 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8046 3361

Life and Nature

Sixteen artists show their love of nature with their woodcuts, ink wash and oil paintings, including works from Yu Zupei, Gong Liang, Zhang Siyong, Cao Xia, Zhao Mengge, Wang Wenlong and more.

Where: Beijing New Millennium Art Gallery, 2/F Diyang Building, 2 Dong Sanhuan Beilu. **When:** till February 20, daily

9 am - 6 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8453 61193

Xiao Shunzhi Solo Exhibition

Guangxi painter Xiao Shunzhi's traditional paintings. Bamboo forests feature prominently.

Where: Fa Fa Gallery, 2 Xiangjiang Beilu, Jingshun Lu, Quanfa Garden Clubhouse **When:** till February 20, daily 9 am - 10 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8430 2587

Modern Traditional Painting Exhibition

Features Li Li, Liu Chunming, and Wang Luxia's traditional painting works, each of which have their special characteristics.

Where: Qin Gallery, 1-1E Enjoy Paradise, Huaweili, north of Beijing Curio City, Chaoyang District **When:** February 12-29, daily 9:30 am - 7 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8779 0458



Movies

Lian'ai Zhongde Baobei (Baober in Love)

Unlike other love stories on screen for Valentine's Day, this movie is not designed to please. It presents a serious question. Facing the fast changes in city life, watching the "solid history" being torn down, it asks people in modern times what kind of changes they are going through in their hearts. Directed by Li Shaohong. Starring Zhou Xun, Chen Kun and Huang Jue. In Mandarin.

Where: cinemas across town **When:** February 10 - 19

**Shiqisui Danche (Beijing Bicycle)**

A country boy named Guei (played by Cui Lin) arrives in Beijing and becomes a bike messenger. Each trip brings in 10 yuan and he's entitled to own his company bicycle after he makes 600 yuan. On the verge of earning that amount, Guei's bicycle is stolen and he's fired for not making a delivery on time. Guei goes on a massive search to locate his bicycle. He finds it but its new owner, Jiang (Li Bin), bought the stolen bike at a market and refuses to surrender it. Directed by Wang Xiaoshuai.

Where: Cherry Lane Movies, 29 Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang District **When:** February 14, 15, 8 pm **Admission:** 50 yuan **Tel:** 13901134745

Anna yu Wulin (Anna in Kung Fu Land)

Martial art experts are gathered together to compete in the annual Wulin Competition, and

the champion will win a contract to make Hollywood movies. Anna (Miriam Yeung) is a beautiful young girl who wants to be a Hollywood star, so when she learns about this golden opportunity she befriends the competition's PR manager Ekin (Ekin Cheng).

Will Anna become a Hollywood Star? Directed by Raymond Yip. Starring Ekin Cheng and Miriam Yeung. In Mandarin.

Where: cinemas across town **When:** till February 9

**Wo Ai Tianshang Renjian (Love Trilogy)**

Six young people go to Yunnan for sightseeing, and love blossoms. Directed by Derek Chiu. Starring Lu Yi, Francis Wu, Anita Yuen and Lin Xinru. In Mandarin.

Where: cinemas across town **When:** till February 9 **Feichang Xiari (A Lingering Face)**

Lei Haiyang, a shy young mechanic, joins up with a young girl out to try her luck in the capital. While he is sleeping, two men brutally rape the girl. The next morning, Lei watches helplessly as the girl is raped again. Too frightened to intervene, he flees. The movie traces a young man's quest for identity and manhood.

Starring Pan Yueying and Ma Xiaoming. Directed by Lu Xuechang. In Mandarin.

Where: Hart Salon, 17 Sanlitun Nanjie (across from Dirty Nellie's), Chaoyang District **When:** February 6, 8 pm **Admission:** 30 yuan (includes a drink) **Tel:** 6504 6010

**Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring**

This three-hour-movie introduces the inhabitants of Middle-earth, the legendary rings of power, and the fellowship of hobbits, elves, dwarves, and humans - led by the wizard Gandalf (Ian McKellen) and the brave hobbit Frodo (Elijah Wood) - who must battle terrifying forces of evil on their journey to destroy the one ring in the land of Mordor. In English with Mandarin captions.

Where: B2M, next to the river in front of Ditan Park South Gate **When:** February 9, 8 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6426 1091



Music

China Philharmonic Orchestra Concert

China Philharmonic Orchestra are to play Edward Elgar's *Serenade in E minor*, Benjamin Britten's *Sinfonia da Requiem*, and Dmitri Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 10 in E major*. Conducted by Vladimir Ashkenazy.

Where: Poly Theater, 1/F Poly Plaza, 14 Dongzhimen Nandajie **When:** February 7, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 80-680 **Tel:** 6500 1188 - 5126

Free Piano Concert

Hungarian pianist Marouan Boda-Benabdallah will play music by Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Schumann, Rachmaninoff and Debussy.

Where: Central Conservatory of Music, 43 Baojia Jie **When:** February 6, 7:30 pm **Admission:** free but must be booked in advance **Tel:** 6724 0571 or 6722 0883

Children's Concert

Beijing Children's Palace Chorus performs *Hallelujah, World of Our Own, Summertime* and more.

Where: Forbidden City Concert Hall, inside Zhongshan Park, Xi Changan Jie **When:** February 8, 2 pm **Admission:** 10 - 100 yuan **Tel:** 6559 8285

Jams

French Music

DJs Fredo and Erika are here to show people what they believe are representative works of French music.

Where: Loup Chante, 38 Chengfu Shi Wei Ying (200m south of Qinghua University's west gate, on the east side of the street) **When:** February 6, 9 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6276 7355

**Hang on the Box**

Guazai Hezi Shang, a renowned four piece female pop-punk band is to play in Nameless Highland, together with Silence and A-OK.

Where: Nameless Highland, Yayuncun, Anhuili Area 1, Building 14 Chaoyang District (200 metres north of the Yayuncun Hospital intersection) **When:** February 7, 9 pm **Admission:** 30 yuan **Tel:** 6489 1613

**Sand**

Blues-jam band Shazi (Sand) will play What? Bar. They might invite members of the audience to give improvisational performances with them.

Where: What? Bar, 72 Beichang Jie (just north of the west gate of the Forbidden City) **When:** February 7, 9 pm **Admission:** 20 yuan (includes a beer) **Tel:** 13910209249

A Simple Life

A visit to the ancient village of Chuan Dixia

By Zhang Ran

Bars in Sanlitun sell music and atmosphere, rather than just drinks, just as villas at Xiang Shan (the Fragrant Hills) sell beautiful scenery, rather than just a bed for the night. Beautiful or unusual scenery often means a hefty addition to the bill, but this is not true when it comes to *nongjiale*, meaning spending a holiday in a peasant's house.

A visit to the village of Chuan Dixia (川底下) will only cost 50 yuan, including a night's accommodation, meals and the two-hour journey from downtown Beijing. **Village on the city's doorstep**

Chuan Dixia is located in Mentougou District, on the old Jingxi Road, which once connected the capital with the coal mines of Shanxi. A family surnamed Han moved from Hongtong County, Shanxi, to settle here and by the Yong Le period of the Ming Dynasty, Chuan Dixia had grown into a village.

The old coal road long ago fell into disuse, however the old village still prospers, thanks to the growth of tourism. In 1994, Chuan Dixia was listed as one of Beijing's key protected cultural relic sites. On November 27, 2003, it became the only village in Beijing Municipality to be listed as one of China's "renowned historical villages."

Built on the side of a mountain, with different levels connected by stairs, Chuan Dixia looks from the road like a traditional castle. Opposite the village is a temple where villagers have long prayed for the prosperity of their offspring, offering a bird's eye of the village.

There are 74 siheyuan, or courtyard houses, dating back to the Qing and Ming dynasties. Each single house is connected by doors, making the whole village a kind of big yard.

The whole village is, in effect, a museum. Traditional mill stones and stone lions can be seen here and there.

There are traditional couplets on the gate walls, and even one or two Cultural Revolution slogans left on some of the walls.

Entering any of the houses, the warmhearted villagers are always willing to tell the history of their house and the story of each piece of furniture.

Using Chuan Dixia as a base, tourists can make day trips to nearby sites, such as Huangcaoliang Great Wall and Ling Mountain, which offers spectacular sunrise views.

Accommodation

There are no hotels as such at Chuan Dixia, but visitors are able to stay in the traditional dwellings of



At this time of year, every doorway is decorated with new chunlian, or Spring Festival couplets.

Photos by Zhou Yuan

Nongjiale travel links:

Xiao Zhangjiakou (小张山口) Village

Located in the town of Dayushu, Yanqing County, the village features remains of the Great Wall and 25 ancient brick kilns. Visitors can explore the Great Wall, climb Shengtaoshan, or even try their hand at making bricks by hand in an ancient kiln.

Seven family homes offer tourist accommodation.

Getting there: Take bus 919 from Deshengmen to Yanqing, then take the local bus to Dayushu.

Penyao (盆窑), ceramics village at Dushan mountain

Located in Yanqing County, this village is well known for its ceramic

works. Visitors can make their own ceramic art works in the village workshops. There are 11 family homes open to tourists.

Getting there: Bus 919 from Deshengmen to Yanqing, and then bus 920 to Penyao.

Heishansi (黑山寺) Village

Set against a backdrop of mountains, Heishansi features relics of Yunfeng Temple, the ancient signal fire terrace and beautiful trees, including a 1,000-year-old maidenhair tree and fancy pine trees.

Getting there: Take bus from Dongzhimen to Miyun and then a local bus to Heishansi



Chuan Dixia from the other side of the valley.

Daily Menu:

Breakfast:

bowl of corn congee
pickled radish
sweetened bean paste bun

Lunch:

pothebs cold and dressed with sauce
stewed chicken with mushroom
fried tomato with eggs
geda tang (soup) with vegetables

Dinner:

pickled radish
home smoked ham
toufu
stewed mushroom
chestnut chicken
fried cabbage

Staple food:

leek and pork pancake
corn flour dumplings with cabbage filling
pork dumplings



the locals.

A *kang* is a typical northern style bed, made of bricks with a space underneath for hot coals, with which it is heated in winter.

In the home of one of the villagers, Han Mengda, there is a 200-year-old kang, or heated bed. There is a bowl sized hole in the front of the kang through which the fuel is heated. This is different from the modern style of kang, which are heated from outside.

A kang is usually made of stone and clay. Some have bricks in the surface for decoration. Usually a kang occupies a whole room, and is aligned along an east-west axis.

However, in Han's house, the kang is on a north-south axis, meaning one sleeps with the head to the north and the feet to the south. Han's kang only occupies half the space of the room, and he says this type is of a kind usually used by the rich.

Thick matting and sheets make the kang as soft to sleep on as a modern bed.

Accommodation is available in the homes of most of the locals, costing around 15 yuan per person.

Local delicacies

Besides the traditional siheyuan, Chuan Dixia is well known for its pothebs.

You can enjoy your breakfast with a bowl of corn congee, pickled radish and a sweetened bean paste bun. For dinner, local specialties include pickled radish, home smoked ham, homemade toufu, stewed mushrooms and chestnut chicken. The chickens are free range and most of the produce comes from local farms. In every kitchen, one can see capsicum and garlic hanging by the door, while the main staple food, corn, is piled up on the roof.

One can taste pancakes made with leek and pork, vegetable dumplings made with corn flour and cabbage. You can even try your hand at making dumplings yourself, if you choose. The locally produced honey is another treasure of Chuan Dixia, and tourists often buy a bottle to take home with them.

Another attraction is that there is no ban on fireworks here, as there is in Beijing. Tourists can set the local dogs barking and scare the chickens with crackers to their heart's content.

Getting there: Bus 929 (zhi) leaves from the western side of Pingguoyuan subway station. Get off at Zhaitang, from where it is a short taxi trip to Chuan Dixia. Entry to the village costs 30 yuan and free guided tours are available.